

Monthly water situation report:

South-east England

1 Summary - April 2026

April weather was dominated by a static anticyclone which blocked North Atlantic low pressure systems. As a result, April was a dry month with only 15% of the long-term average (LTA) rainfall recorded across the south-east of England. The distribution of rainfall was roughly east-west. Most of Thames (THM) and Solent and South Downs (SSD) had rainfall in the notably low category with Hertfordshire and North London (HNL) and Kent and South London (KSL) in the exceptionally low category. The higher than average soil moisture deficit (SMD) across the south-east from the end of March continued throughout April, and rose steadily to end the month at around twice the LTA for April.

River flows declined during April, continuing the seasonal trend which many of the indicator sites started in late February. Around half of the indicator sites were normal for April. The expected steady decline of groundwater levels for this time of year continued during the month for most of the indicator sites. Levels ranged from notably low (Jackaments, THM) to notably high (West Meon, SSD). Most of the groundwater flood alerts were removed during April, leaving one in THM. No fluvial flood alerts were issued during the month.

1.1 Rainfall

April weather was dominated by a static anticyclone which blocked North Atlantic low pressure systems. As a result, April was a dry month with only 15% of the LTA rainfall recorded across the south-east of England. This was the second consecutive month of below average rainfall across all four areas. The distribution of rainfall was roughly east-west. Most of THM and SSD had rainfall in the notably low category but HNL and KSL, both with 10% of the LTA monthly rainfall, were exceptionally low. THM was marginally the wettest area with 20% of the LTA rainfall. Lee Chalk (HNL) had the fourth driest April on record, with April 2021 drier. For the two months ending April, Romney Marsh, Dover Chalk and Thanet Chalk (all KSL) were the driest since 1997, ranking third driest on record.

The highest daily rainfall total was 12.5mm, recorded at Northfleet, KSL on 13 April. Rainfall on 11, 12 and 13 April accounted for the top five rainfall totals for all four areas of the south-east of England. The rainfall from 12 to 15 of the month accounted for around 50% of the month's total rainfall. On average there were 24 'dry' days (less than 0.2mm rainfall in a day). These were distributed either side of the wetter few days mid-month.

1.2 Soil moisture deficit and recharge

The higher than average SMD across the south-east from the end of March continued throughout April, and rose steadily to end around twice the LTA for April. The SMDs for SSD were close to three times the LTA for April. Unsurprisingly, the recharge across the south-east during April was negligible as a result of the low rainfall combined with the high SMDs.

1.3 River flows

River flows declined during April, continuing the seasonal trend which many of the indicator sites started in late February. Around half of the indicator sites were normal for April, mainly supported by groundwater. Four sites supported by relatively high groundwater levels were in the above normal band. These included the Test at Allbrook and Highbridge (SSD) and the Mimram at Panshanger (HNL). Rivers draining impermeable catchments recorded flows in either the below normal or notably low bands. These included the Loddon at Sheepbridge (THM) and the Medway at Teston and East Farleigh (KSL) which were both below normal and the Lymington River at Brockenhurst (SSD) that was notably low. The Arun at Alfoldean, also in the notably low category, recorded the fourth lowest April flow on record, after 2011. There were no fluvial flood alerts during the month.

	HNL	THM	SSD	KSL	Total
Fluvial Alerts	0	0	0	0	0
GW alerts	0	1	0	0	1
Total	0	1	0	0	1

1.4 Groundwater levels

The expected steady decline of groundwater levels for this time of year continued during the month for most of the indicator sites. Lilley Bottom (HNL) levels peaked during April. Levels ranged from notably low (Jackaments, THM) to notably high (West Meon, SSD) Ten of the 16 indicator sites were in the normal band. Generally, the sites in the higher categories were in the Test Chalk or the South Downs, which demonstrated a residual response to the heavy rainfall and recharge during the winter which impacted the south coast. The exception to this was Little Bucket (KSL), North Downs, that had levels in the above normal category. The groundwater flood alerts issued in KSL and SSD were removed during April, leaving one in THM.

1.5 Reservoir stocks

The reservoir storage during April was above average at half of the reported reservoirs in the south-east, although levels have dropped slightly. Storage in Lower Thames (THM), Darwell and Powdermill (both KSL) and Arlington (SSD) ended the month below the LTA for April.

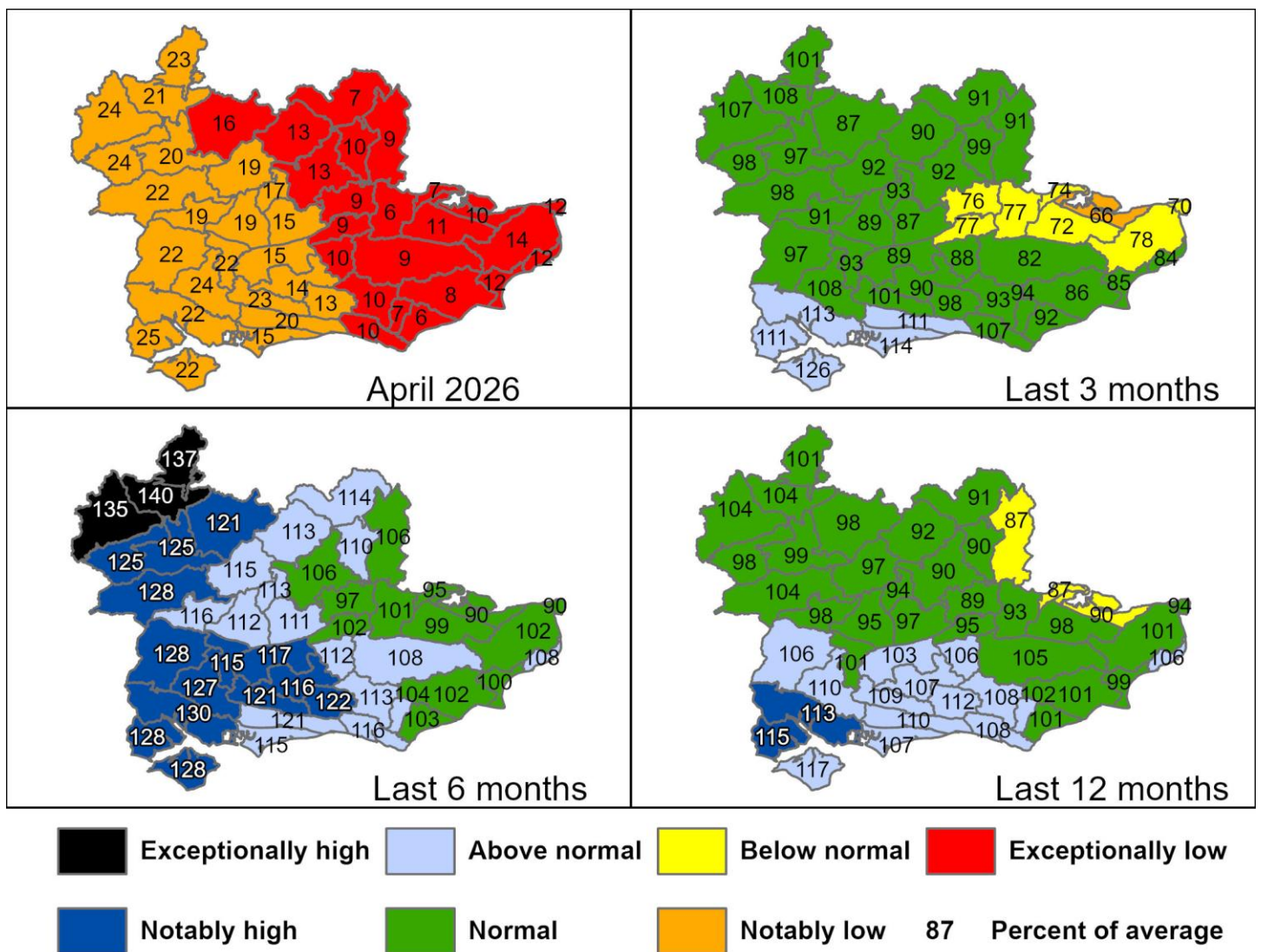
Author: groundwaterhydrology@environment-agency.gov.uk

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2 Maps

2.1 Rainfall map

Figure 2.1: Total rainfall for hydrological areas for the current month (up to 30 April 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.

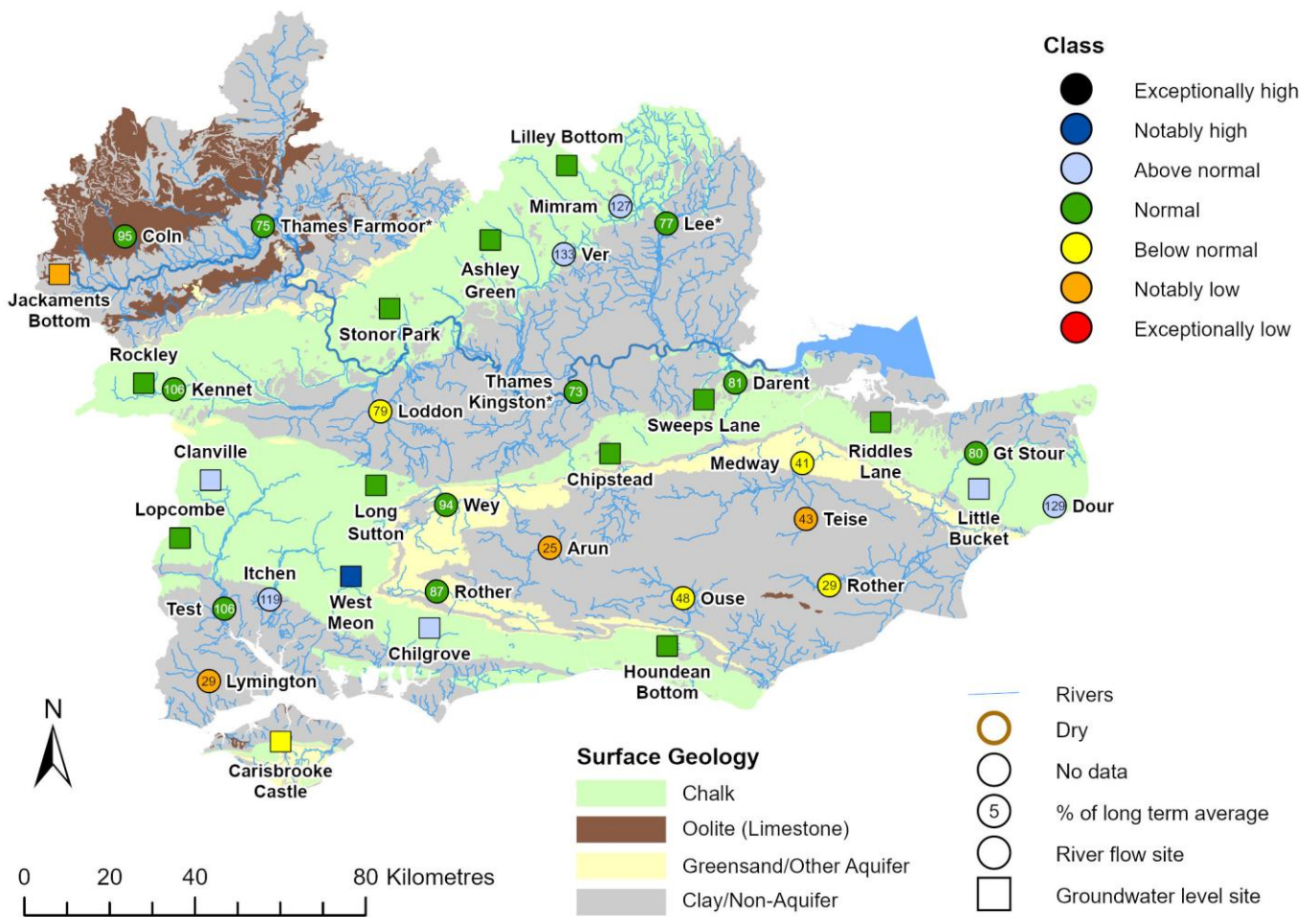


Rainfall data for Oct 2023 onwards, extracted from Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges. (Source: Environment Agency. Crown Copyright 2026 AC0000807064). Rainfall data prior to Oct 2023 extracted from Met Office HadUK 1km gridded rainfall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

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)		Effective Rainfall (mm)			SMD (mm) Day 30	End Apr LTA
		30 day Total	April % LTA	30 day total	April LTA	%		
6010TH	Cotswolds - West (A)	14	24%	1	4%		41	19
6070TH	Berkshire Downs (G)	13	22%	0	1%		69	27
6130TH	Chilterns - West (M)	10	18%	0	1%		73	29
6162TH	North Downs - Hampshire (P)	14	22%	0	1%		68	26
6190TH	Wey - Greensand (S)	9	15%	0	0%		72	26
	Thames Average	11	20%	0	1%		69	28
	Thames Catchment Average	10	18%	0	1%		70	28
6140TH	Chilterns - East - Colne (N)	7	13%	0	0%		75	29
6600TH	Lee Chalk	3	7%	0	0%		77	43
6507TH	North London	6	12%	0	0%		77	36
6509TH	Roding	4	8%	0	0%		78	37
	Herts and North London	5	10%	0	0%		77	36
6230TH	North Downs - South London (W)	5	8%	0	0%		75	27
6706So	Darent	3	6%	0	0%		77	31

6707So	North Kent Chalk	5	11%	0	2%	76	29
6708So	Stour	6	14%	0	2%	76	30
6809So	Medway	4	9%	0	0%	75	26
	Kent & South London Average	4	10%	0	0%	79	40
6701So	Test Chalk	13	22%	0	1%	69	26
6702So	East Hampshire Chalk	15	24%	0	2%	66	25
6703So	West Sussex Chalk	12	19%	0	1%	69	25
6804So	Arun	8	14%	0	0%	74	26
6805So	Adur	7	13%	0	0%	73	26
	Solent & South Downs Average	9	17%	0	1%	73	26
	South East Average	8	15%	0	1%	74	32

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.

Summer period 01/04/2026 to 30/04/2026

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)	14	24%	1	4%
6070TH	Berkshire Downs (G)	13	22%	0	1%
6130TH	Chilterns - West (M)	10	18%	0	1%
6162TH	North Downs - Hampshire (P)	14	22%	0	1%
6190TH	Wey - Greensand (S)	9	15%	0	0%
	Thames Average	11	20%	0	1%
	Thames Catchment Average	10	18%	0	1%
6140TH	Chilterns - East - Colne (N)	7	13%	0	0%
6600TH	Lee Chalk	3	7%	0	0%
6507TH	North London	6	12%	0	0%
6509TH	Roding	4	8%	0	0%
	Herts and North London	5	10%	0	0%
6230TH	North Downs - South London (W)	5	8%	0	0%

6706So	Darent	3	6%	0	0%
6707So	North Kent Chalk	5	11%	0	2%
6708So	Stour	6	14%	0	2%
6809So	Medway	4	9%	0	0%
	Kent & South London Average	4	10%	0	0%
6701So	Test Chalk	13	22%	0	2%
6702So	East Hampshire Chalk	15	24%	0	1%
6703So	West Sussex Chalk	12	19%	0	1%
6804So	Arun	8	14%	0	0%
6805So	Adur	7	13%	0	0%
	Solent & South Downs Average	9	17%	0	1%
	South East Average	8	15%	0	1%

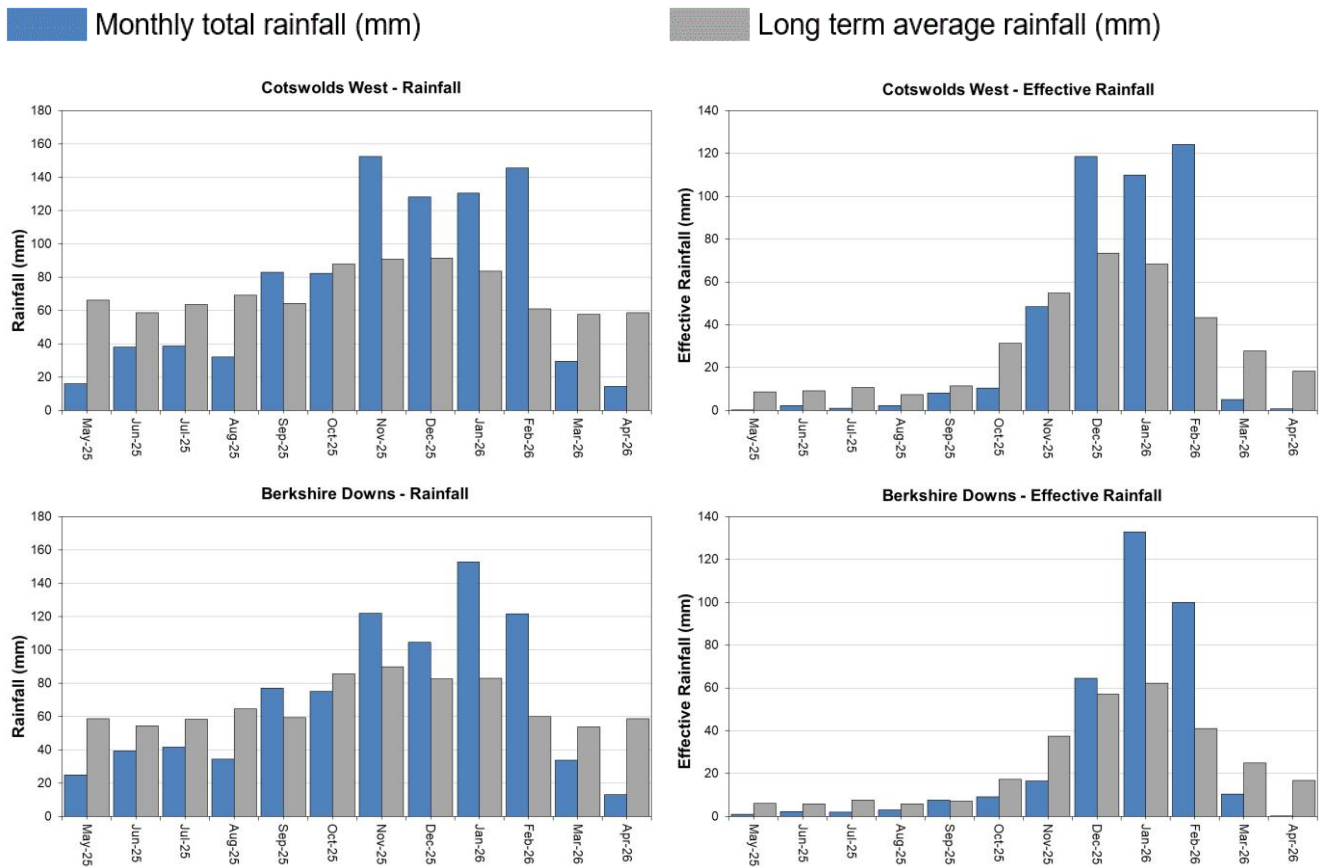
HadUK rainfall data. (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026).

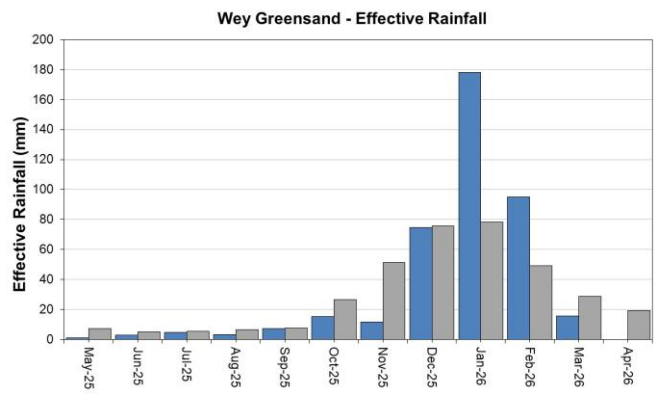
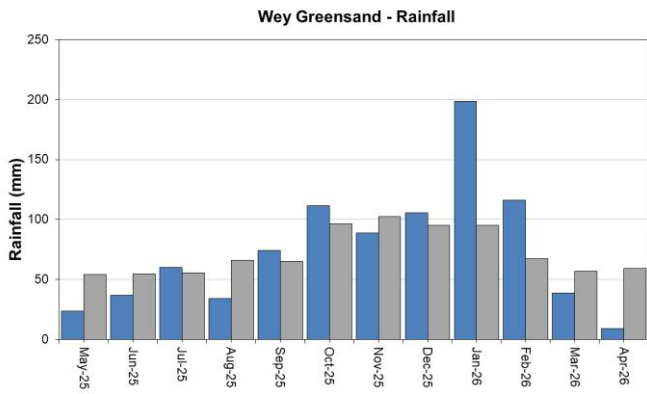
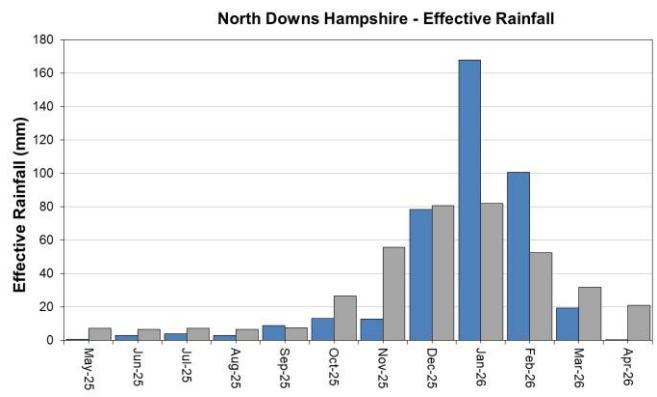
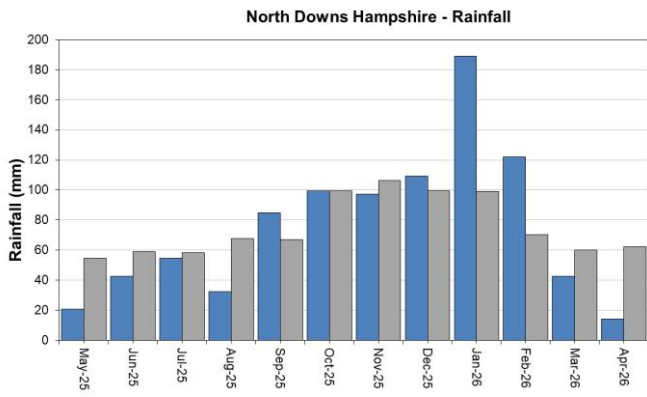
EA effective rainfall data (Source EA Soil Moisture Model 2026.)

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.



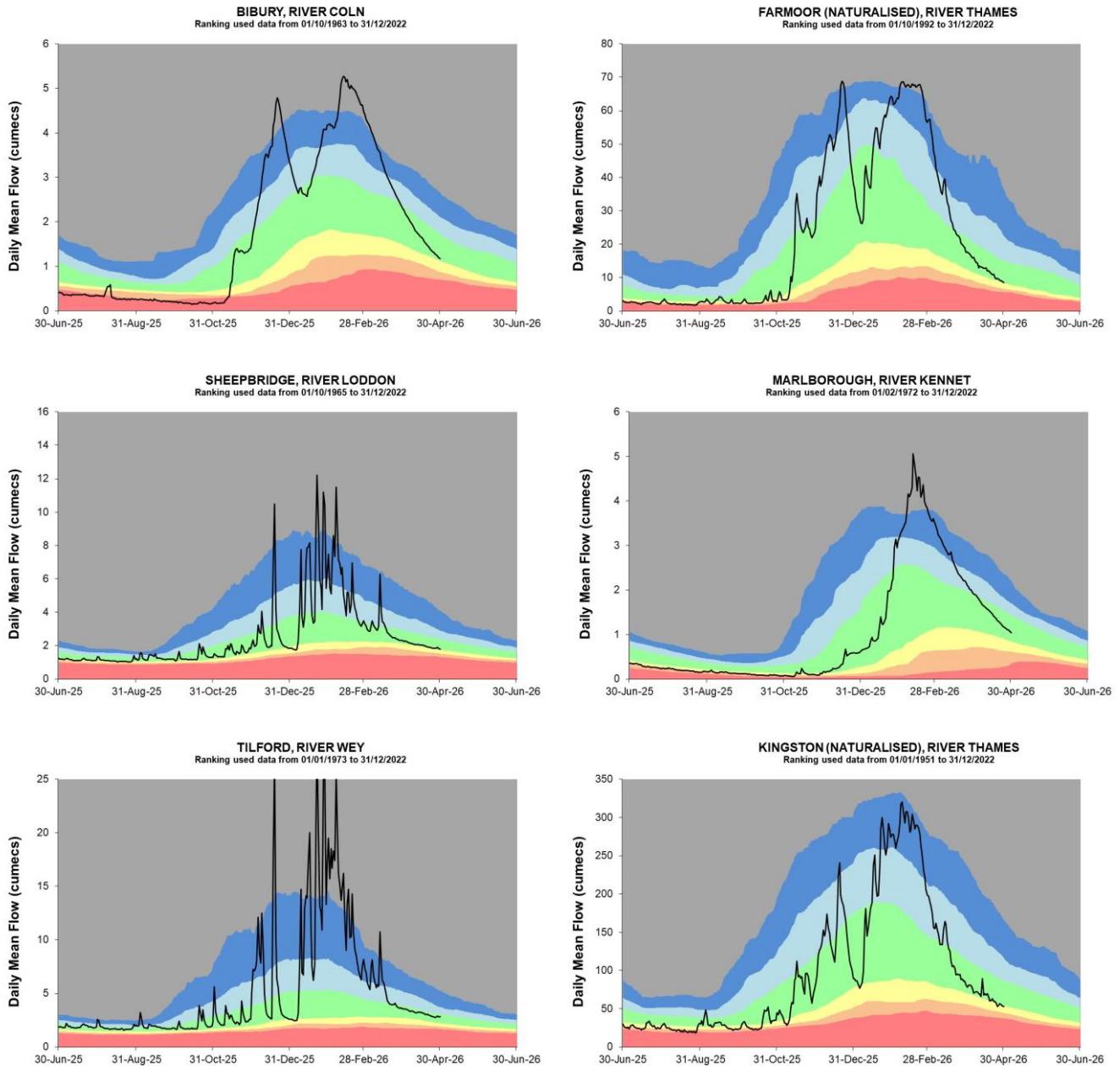


HadUK rainfall data. (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026).

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

4.2 Thames River flow charts

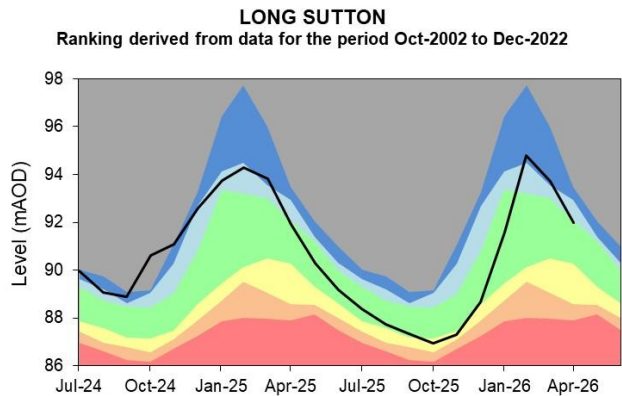
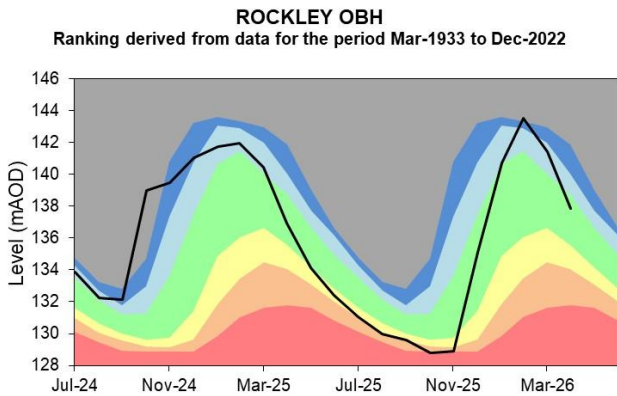
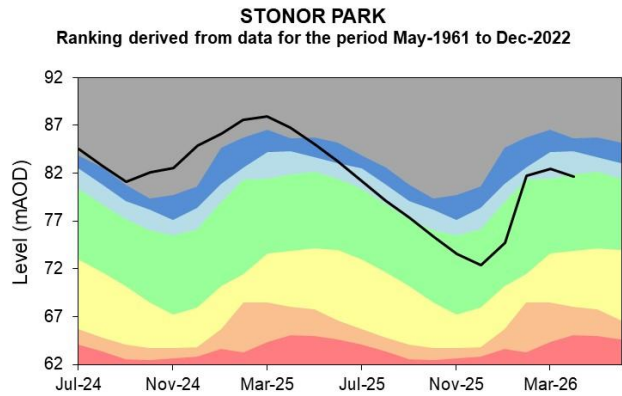
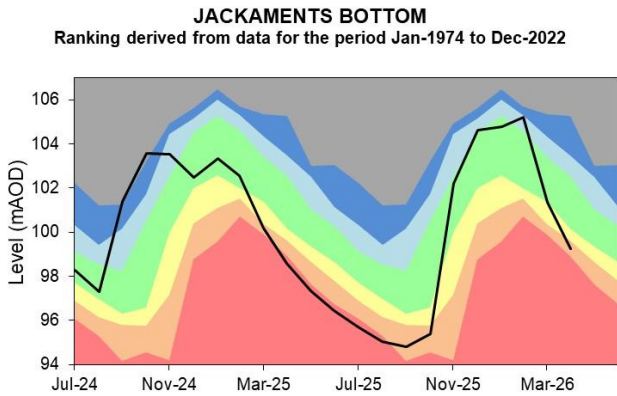
Figure 4.2: Daily mean river flow for index sites over the past year, compared to an analysis of historic daily mean flows, and long term maximum and minimum flows.



Source: Environment Agency. 2026

4.3 Thames Groundwater level charts

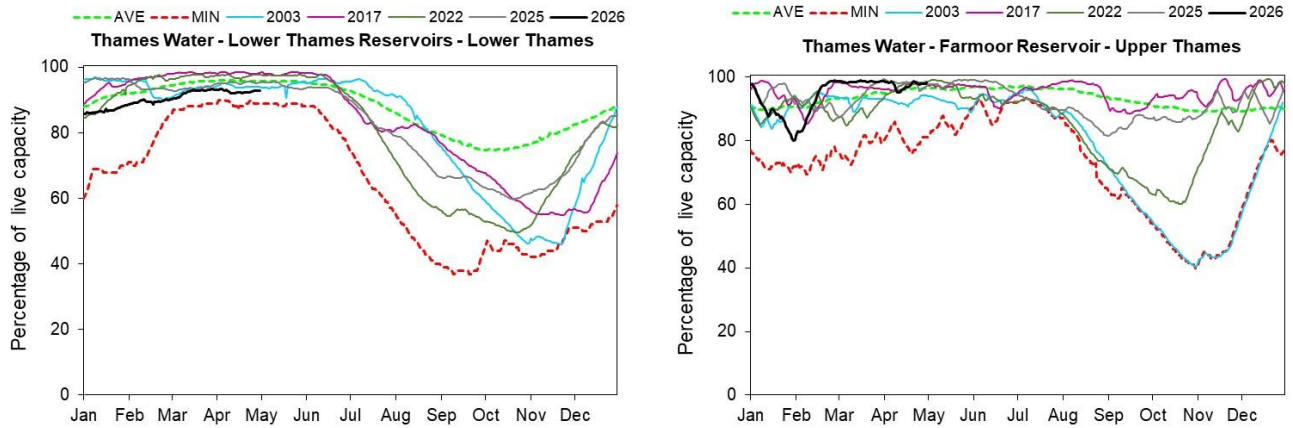
Figure 4.3: End of month groundwater levels at index groundwater level sites for major aquifers. 22 months compared to an analysis of historic end of month levels and long term maximum and minimum levels.



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.

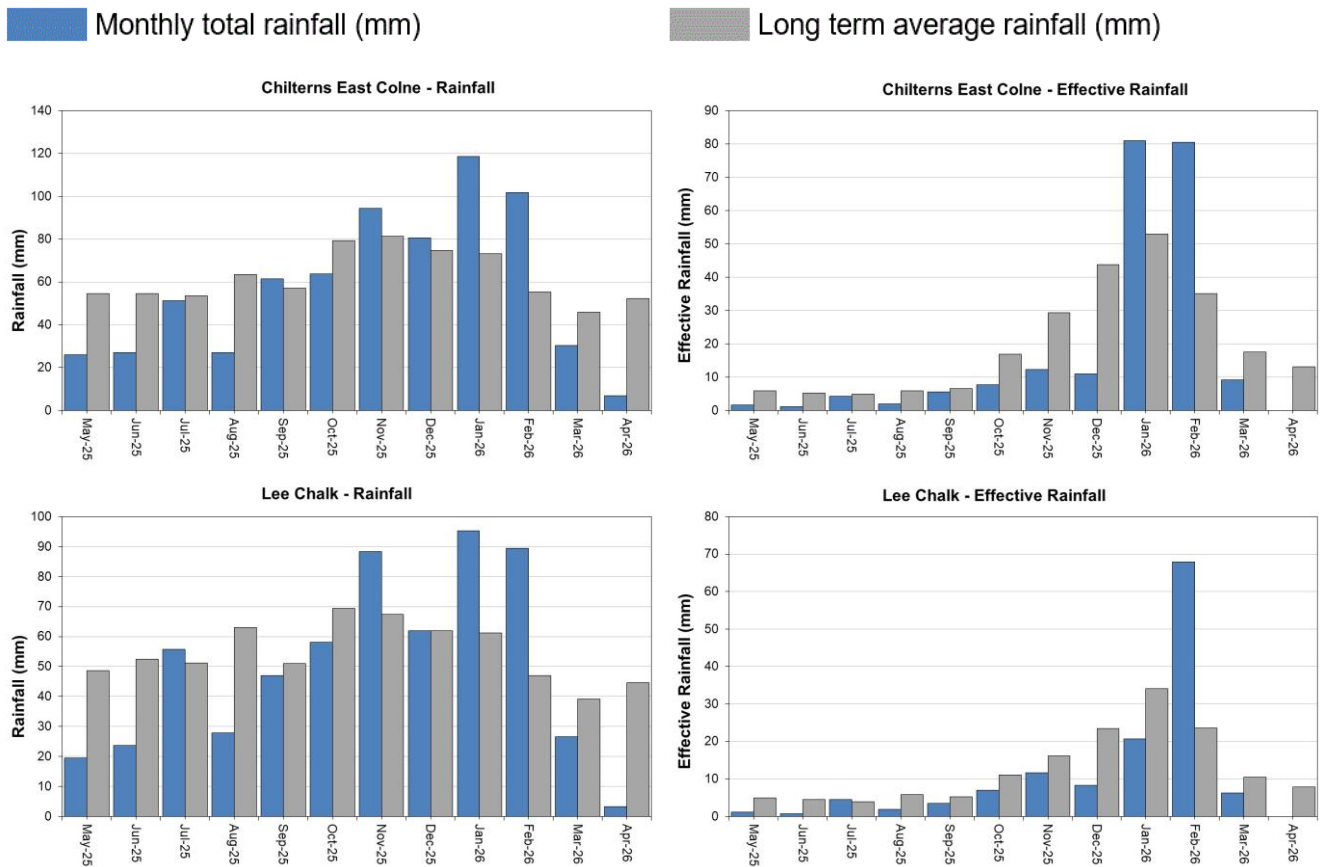


(Source: water companies).

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.

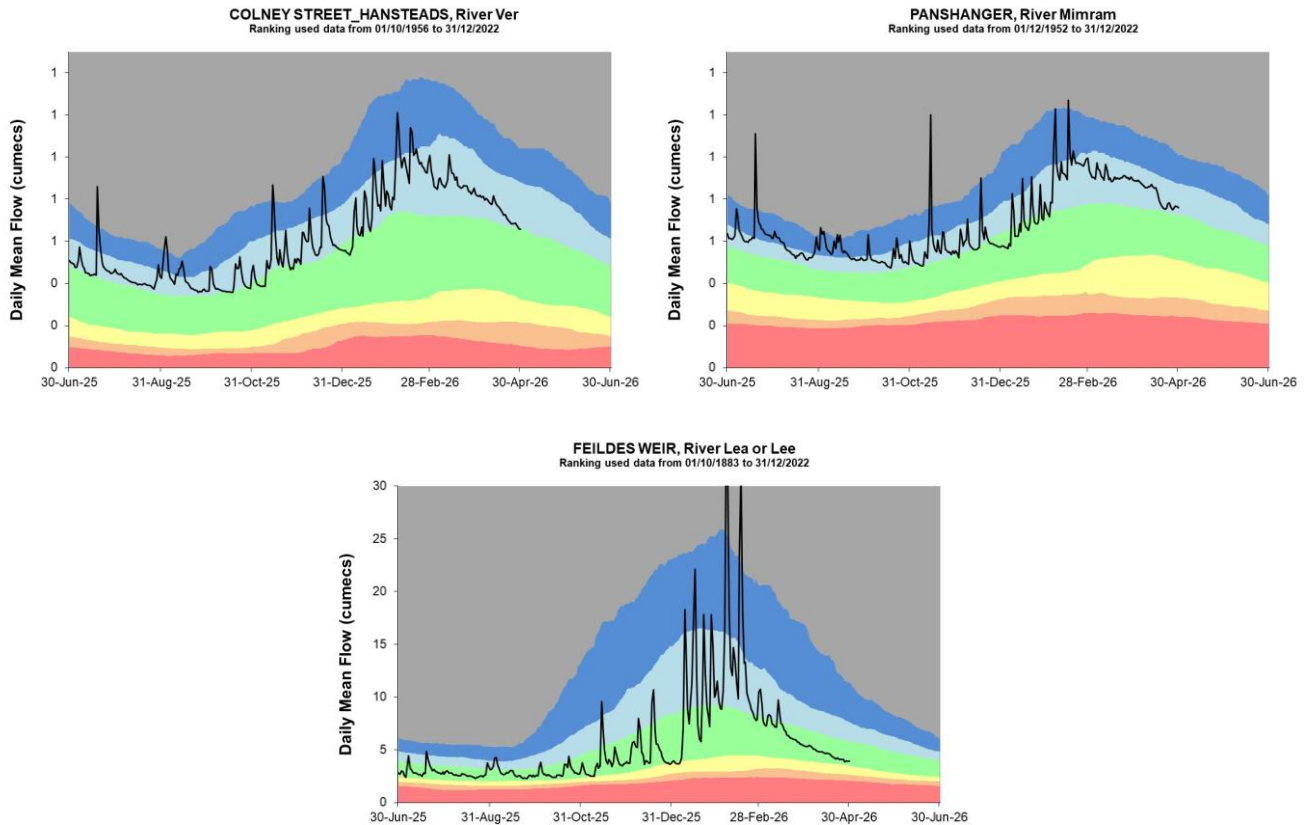


HadUK rainfall data. (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026).

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

5.2 HNL River flow charts

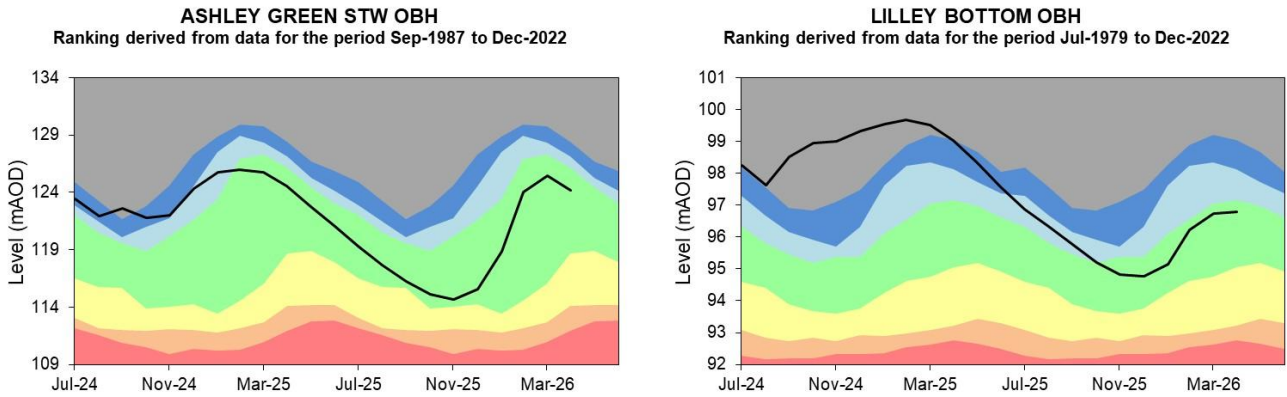
Figure 5.2 Daily mean river flow for index sites over the past year, compared to an analysis of historic daily mean flows, and long term maximum and minimum flows.



Source: Environment Agency. 2026

5.3 HNL Groundwater level charts

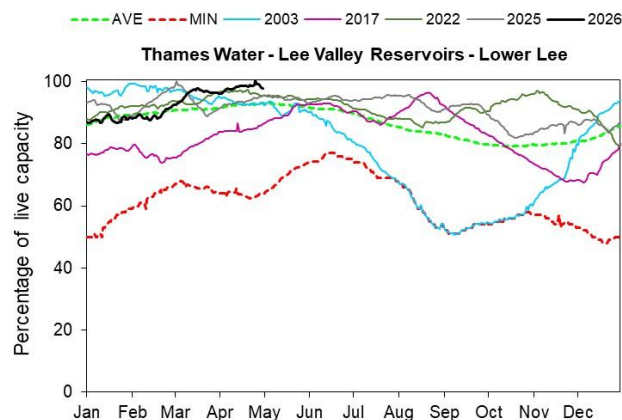
Figure 5.3: End of month groundwater levels at index groundwater level sites for major aquifers. 22 months compared to an analysis of historic end of month levels and long term maximum and minimum levels.



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.

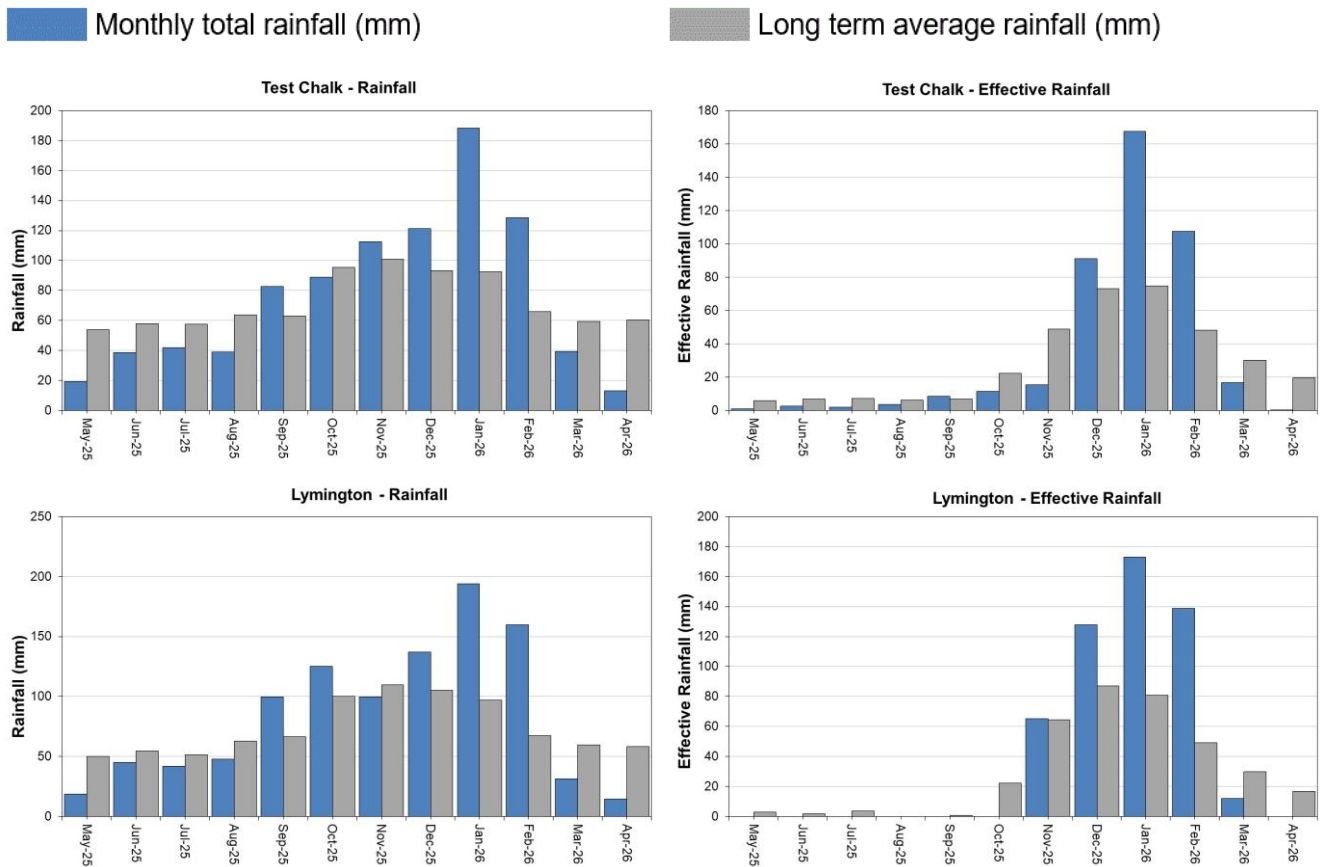


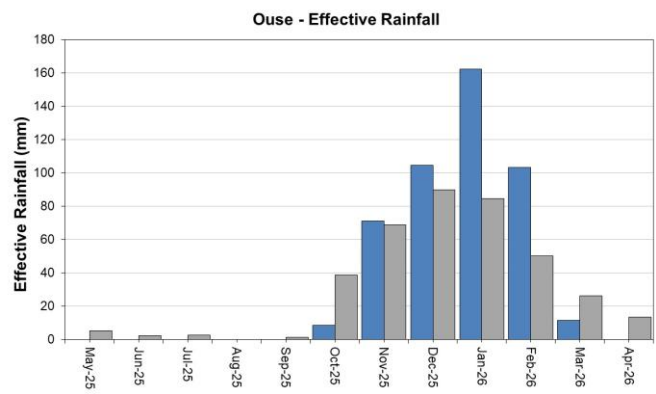
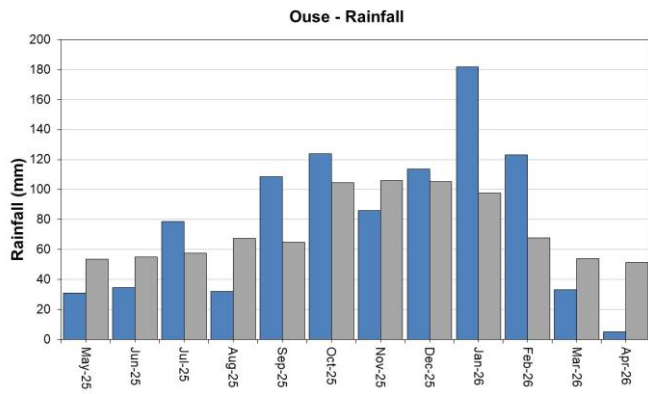
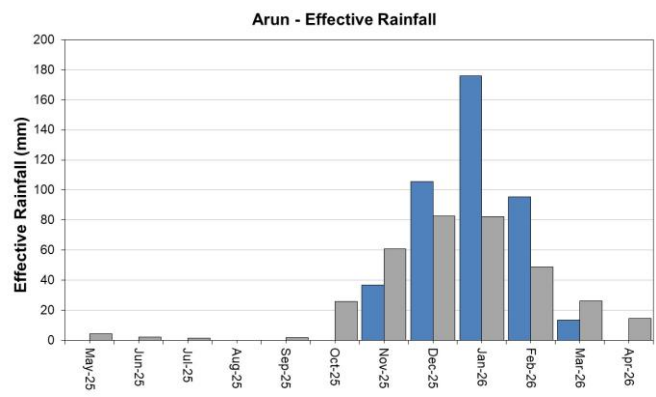
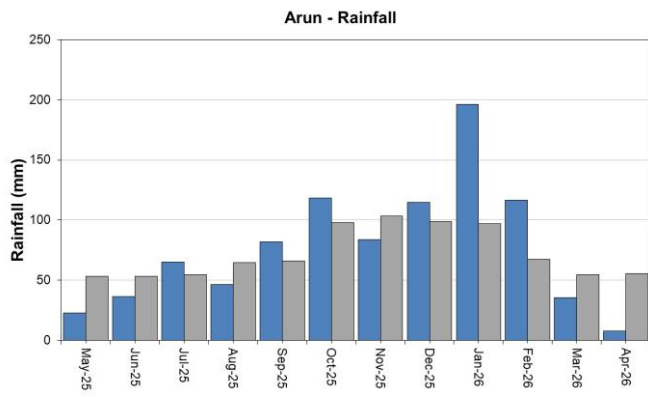
(Source: water companies).

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.



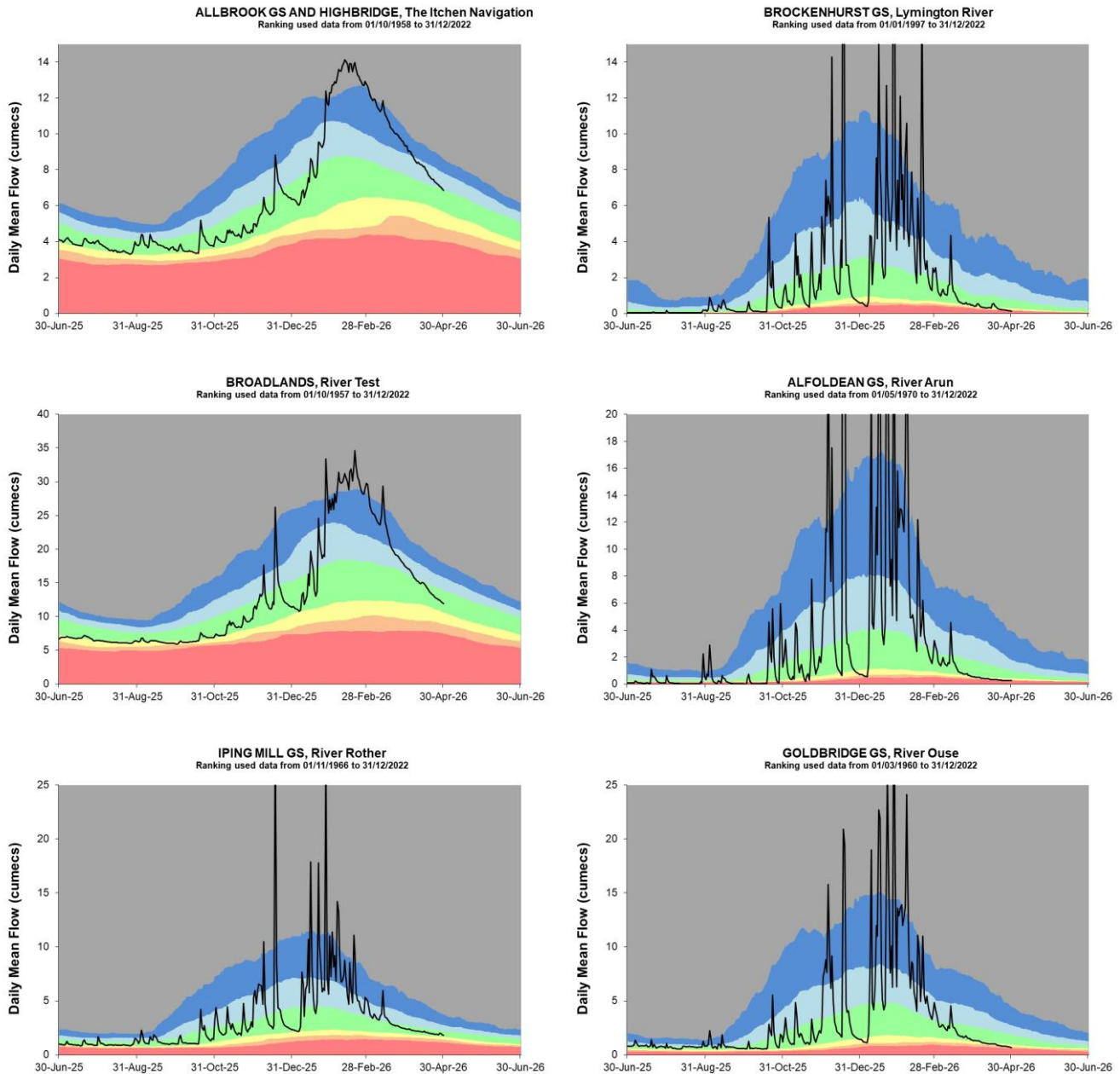


HadUK rainfall data. (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026).

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

6.2 SSD River flow charts

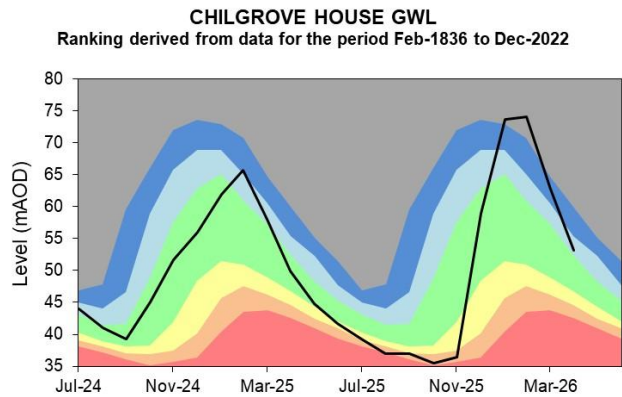
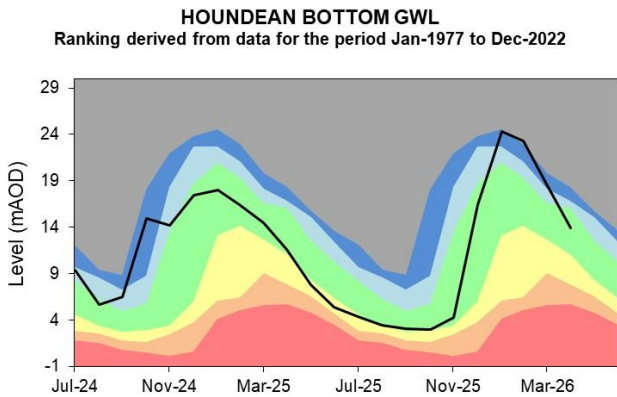
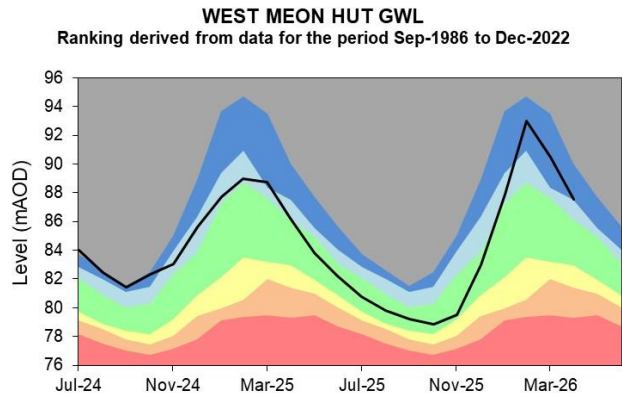
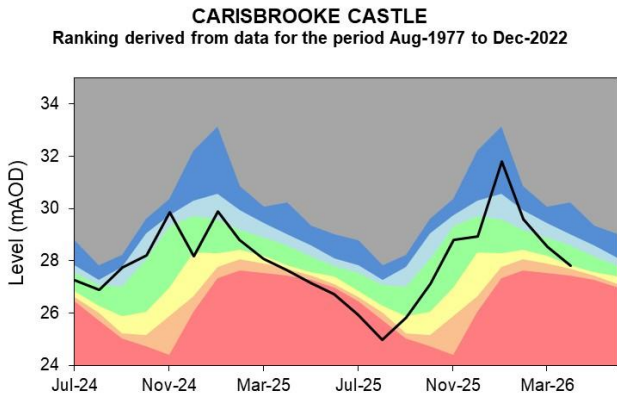
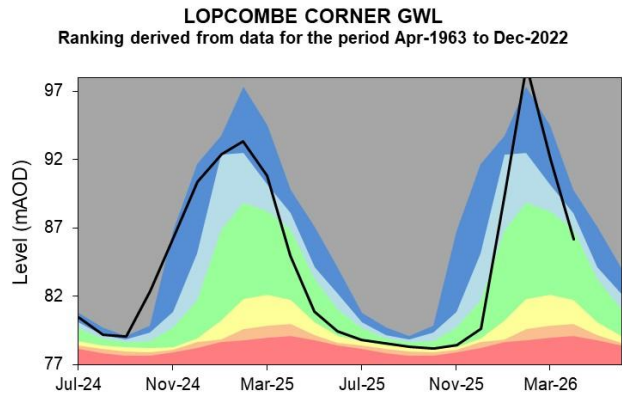
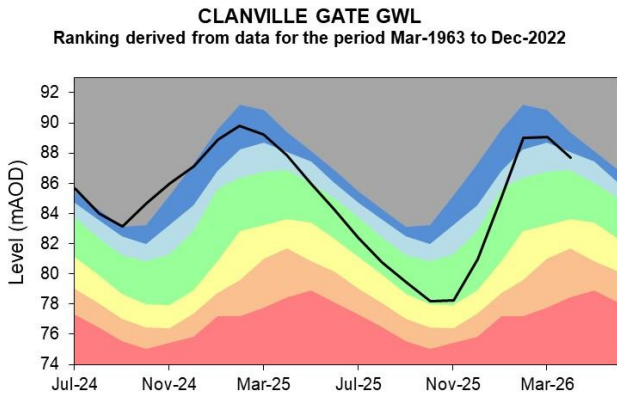
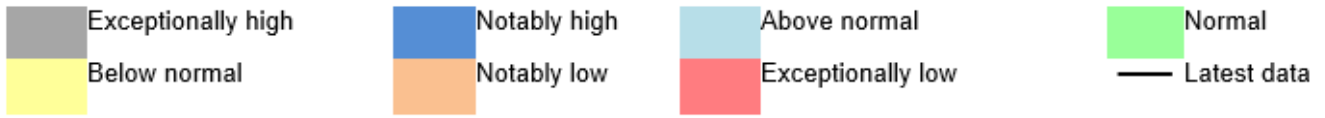
Figure 6.2: Daily mean river flow for index sites over the past year, compared to an analysis of historic daily mean flows, and long term maximum and minimum flows.



Source: Environment Agency. 2026

6.3 SSD Groundwater levels

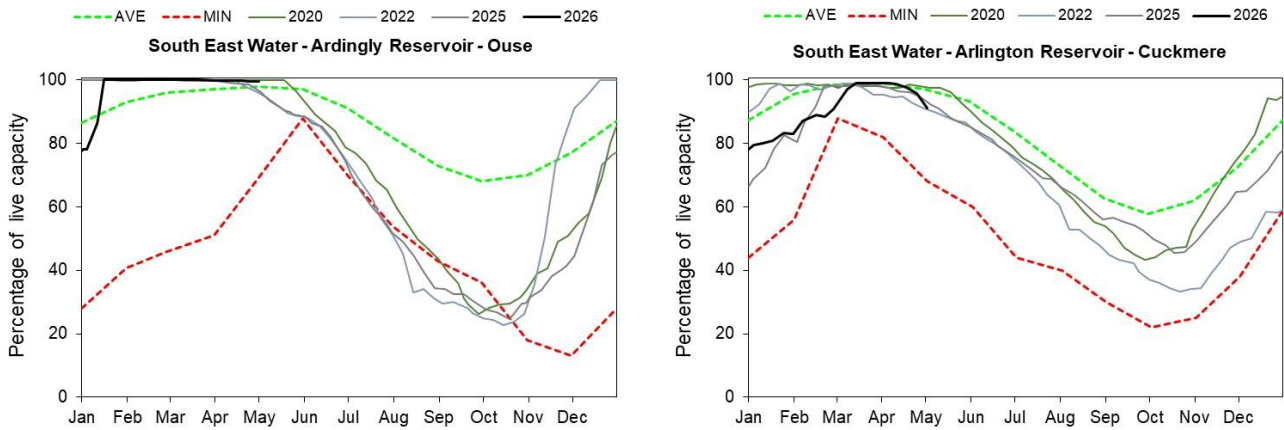
Figure 6.3: End of month groundwater levels at index groundwater level sites for major aquifers. 22 months compared to an analysis of historic end of month levels and long term maximum and minimum levels.



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.

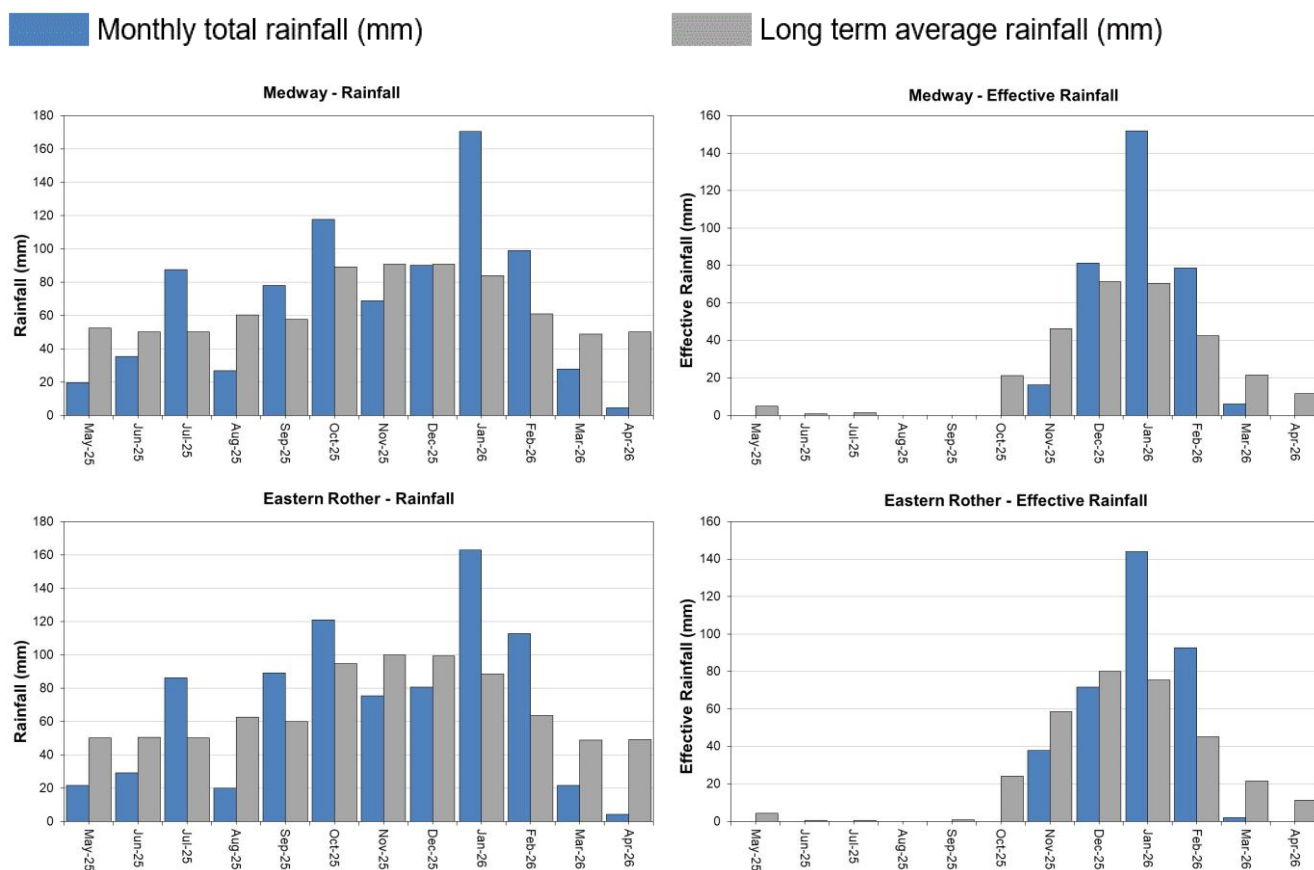


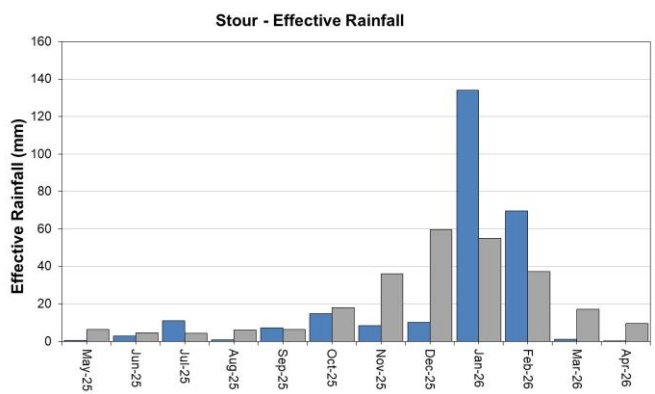
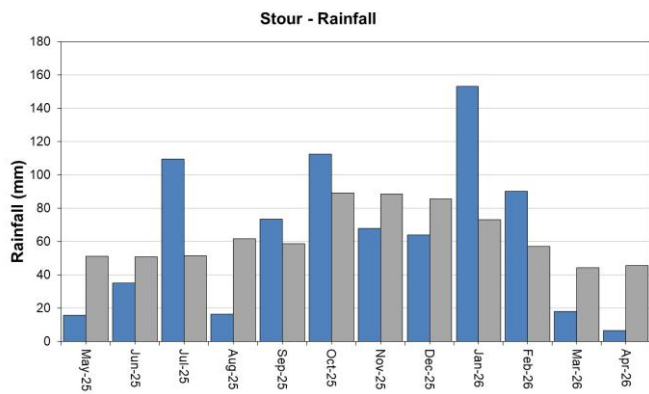
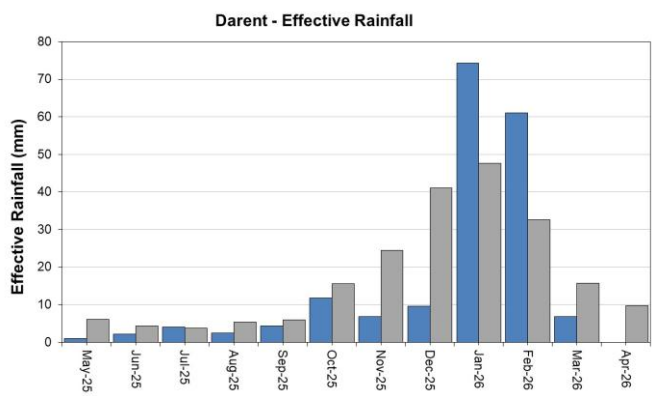
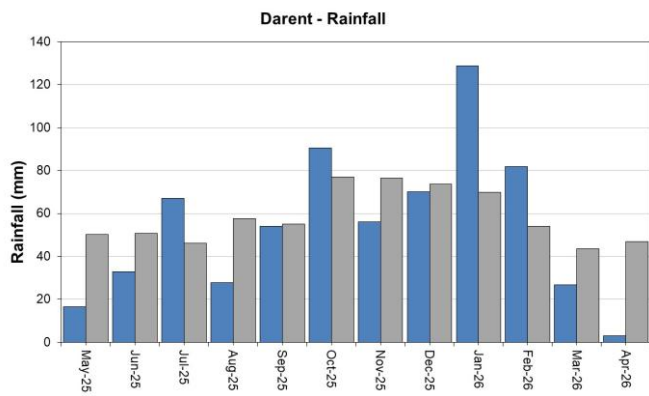
(Source: water companies).

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.



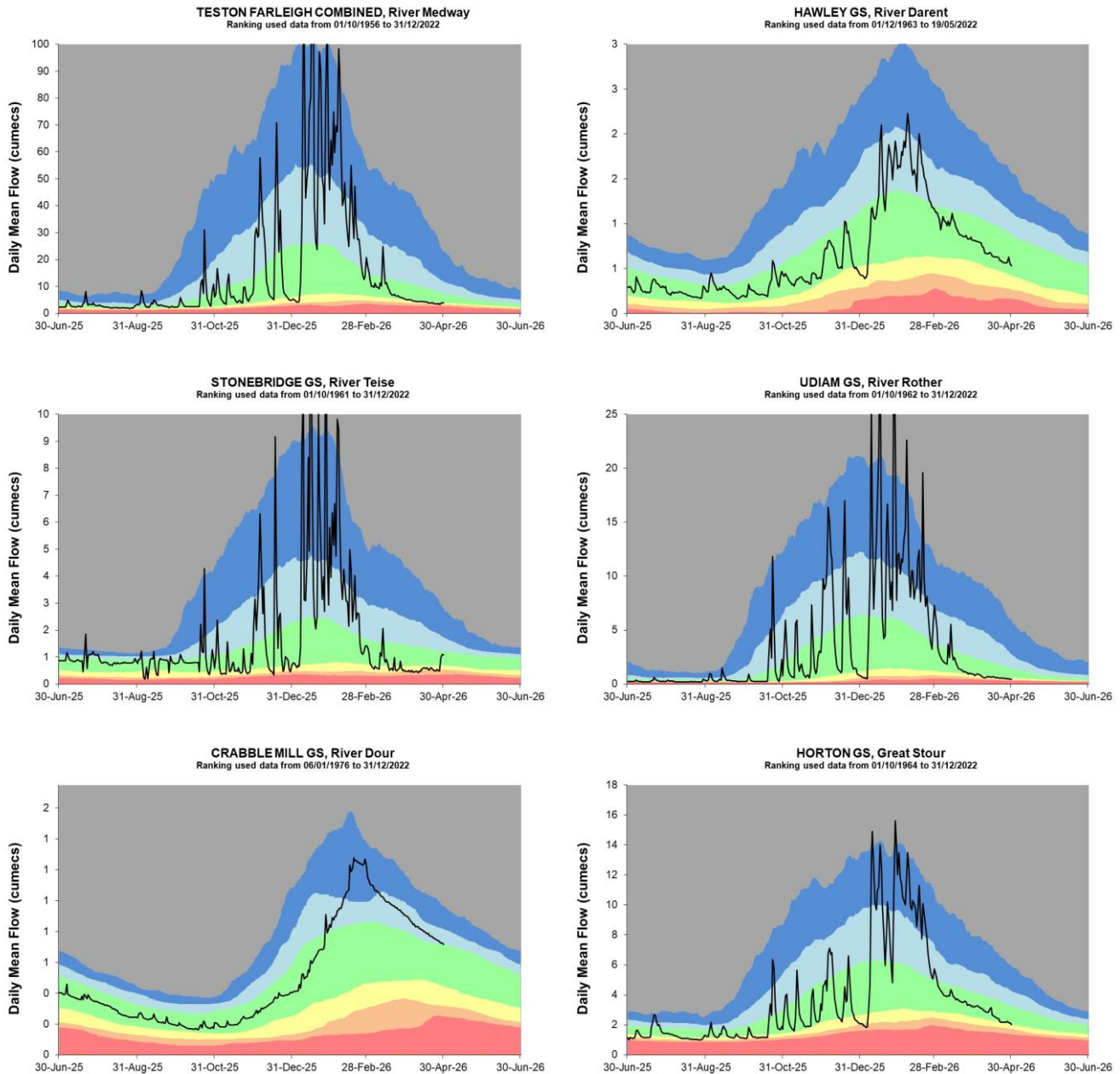


HadUK rainfall data. (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026).

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

7.2 KSL River flow charts

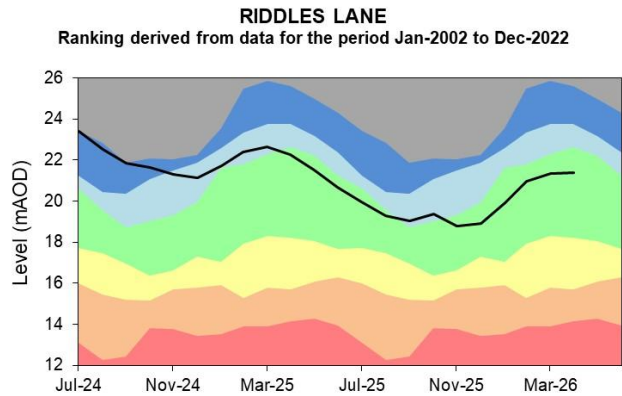
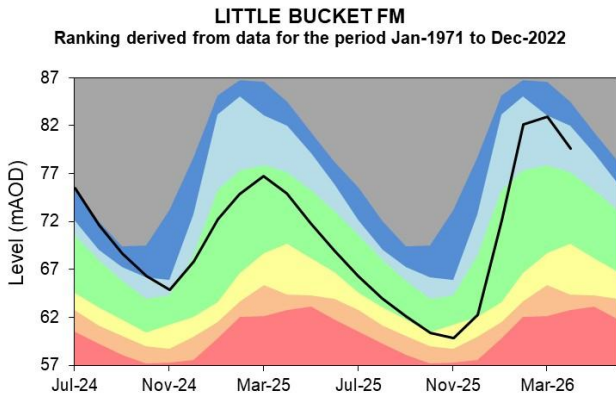
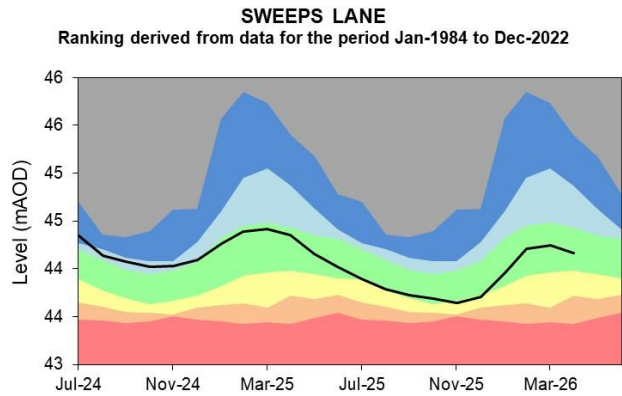
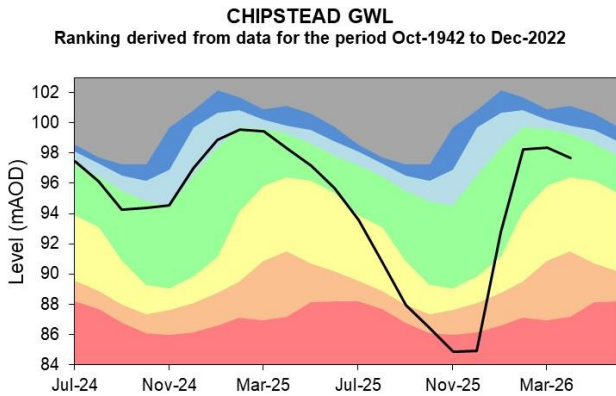
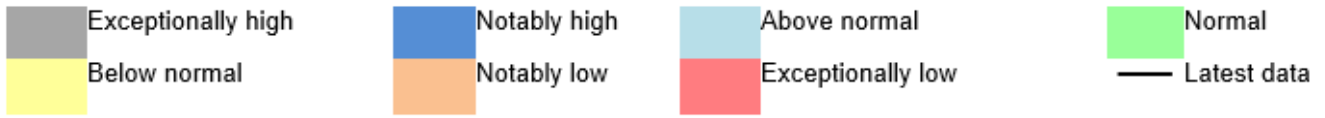
Figure 7.2: Daily mean river flow for index sites over the past year, compared to an analysis of historic daily mean flows, and long term maximum and minimum flows.



Source: Environment Agency. 2026

7.3 KSL Groundwater levels

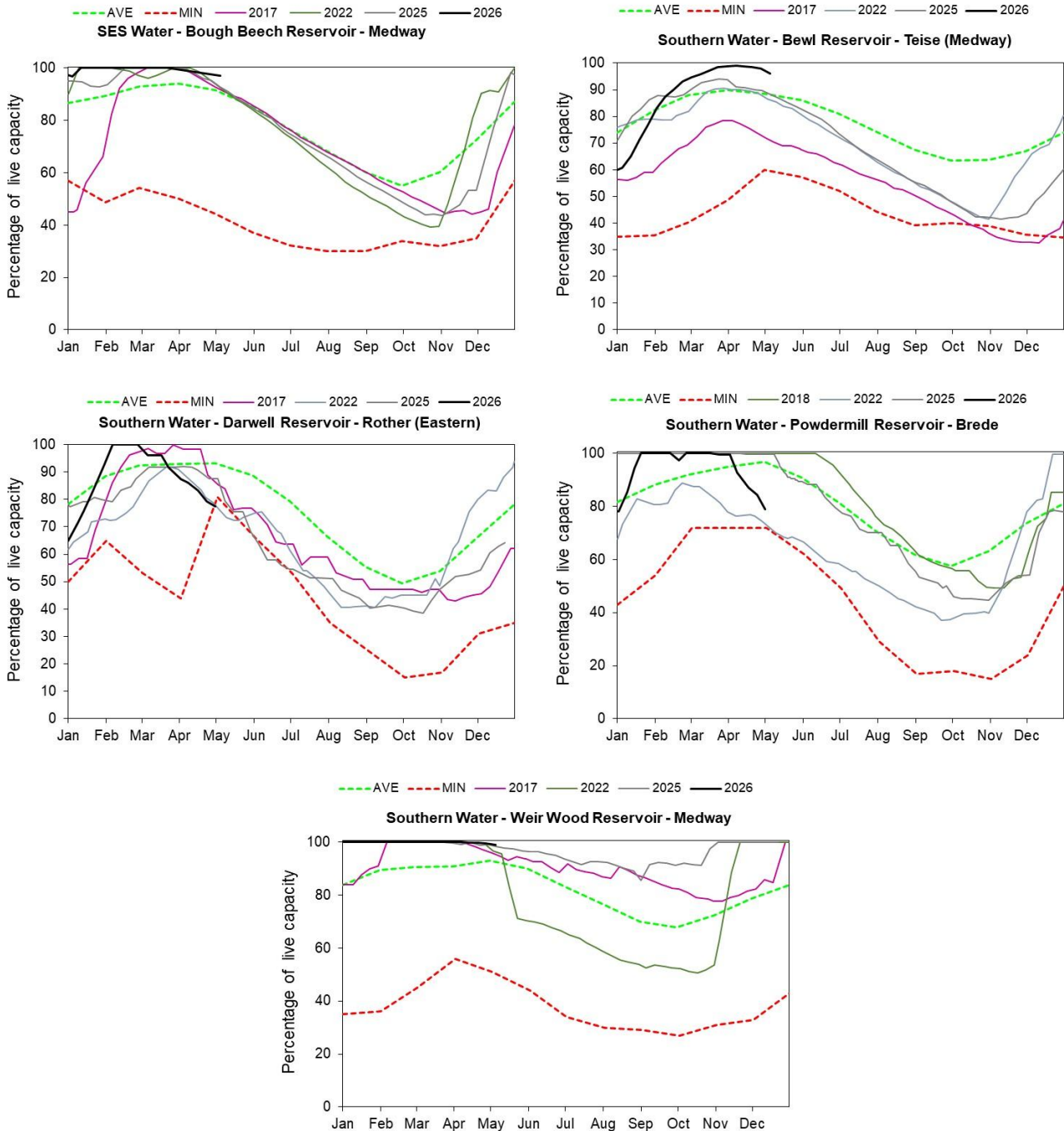
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Source: Environment Agency. 2026

7.4 KSL Reservoir stocks

Figure 7.4: 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).

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	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
Cotswold West	24	Notably Low	Normal	Exceptionally high	Normal
Cotswold East	21	Notably Low	Normal	Exceptionally high	Normal
Berkshire Downs	22	Notably Low	Normal	Notably high	Normal
Chilterns West	19	Notably Low	Normal	Above normal	Normal
Chilterns East Colne	13	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Above normal	Normal
North Downs - Hampshire	22	Notably Low	Normal	Notably high	Normal
North Downs - South London	9	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Normal	Normal
Upper Thames	24	Notably Low	Normal	Notably high	Normal
Upper Cherwell	23	Notably Low	Normal	Exceptionally high	Normal
Thame	16	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Notably high	Normal
Loddon	19	Notably Low	Normal	Above normal	Normal
Lower Wey	15	Notably Low	Normal	Above normal	Normal
Upper Mole	10	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Above normal	Above normal
Lower Lee	10	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Above normal	Normal
North London	13	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Normal	Normal
South London	9	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Normal	Normal
Roding	9	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Normal	Below normal
Ock	20	Notably Low	Normal	Notably high	Normal
Enborne	19	Notably Low	Normal	Above normal	Normal
Cut	17	Notably Low	Normal	Above normal	Normal
Lee Chalk	7	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Above normal	Normal
River Test	22	Notably Low	Normal	Notably high	Above normal
East Hampshire Chalk	24	Notably Low	Normal	Notably high	Above normal
West Sussex Chalk	20	Notably Low	Above normal	Above normal	Above normal

East Sussex Chalk	10	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Above normal	Above normal
Sw Isle Of Wight	22	Notably Low	Above normal	Notably high	Above normal
River Darent	6	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Normal	Normal
North Kent Chalk	11	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Normal	Normal
Stour	14	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Normal	Normal
Dover Chalk	12	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Above normal	Above normal
Thanet Chalk	12	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Normal	Normal
Western Rother Greensand	23	Notably Low	Normal	Notably high	Above normal
Hampshire Tertiaries	23	Notably Low	Above normal	Notably high	Notably high
Lymington River Avon Water And O	25	Notably Low	Above normal	Notably high	Notably high
Sussex Coast	15	Notably Low	Above normal	Above normal	Above normal
River Arun	14	Notably Low	Normal	Notably high	Above normal
River Adur	13	Notably Low	Normal	Notably high	Above normal
River Ouse	10	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Above normal	Above normal
Cuckmere River	7	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Above normal	Above normal
Pevensey Levels	6	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Normal	Normal
River Medway	9	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Above normal	Normal
Eastern Rother	8	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Normal	Normal
Romney Marsh	12	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Normal	Normal
North West Grain	7	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Normal	Below normal
Sheppy	10	Exceptionally Low	Notably low	Normal	Below normal

9.2 River flows table

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

9.3 Groundwater table

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

9.4 South-east England area units for reference



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