Monthly water situation report: Wessex Area

1 Summary - April 2026

April 2026 continued the dry weather experienced in March with an average of 19mm falling in Wessex, 32% of the long term average (LTA). The majority of days were dry with the main rainfall recorded on 15 April. The past two-month period across the Wessex region has been the 12th driest March and April on record and fifth driest for the Poole Harbour and Purbeck area. Soil moisture deficit (SMD) rose in April in response to the low rainfall and is now at a similarly high level to 2025. Monthly mean flows were mostly below normal across the north of Wessex but predominately normal for those locations in the south which are supported by the Chalk aquifer. The Bristol Frome at Frenchay is reported as exceptionally low monthly mean flows. Groundwater levels in Wessex fell during April. At the end of April most groundwater sites, including those on the Chalk aquifer recorded normal levels. The exceptions to this are Didmarton (monitoring the Inferior Oolite) which recorded notably high levels and Chipley (monitoring the Otter Sandstone) which recorded below normal levels. Overall reservoir levels for Wessex Water were approximately 94% capacity at the end of April while for Bristol Water, levels were approximately 93% capacity.

1.1 Rainfall

An average of 19mm rain fell across Wessex in April (32% of the LTA). Most days in April were dry. Rain fell mostly towards the middle of the month with the largest rainfall event occurring on 15 April. Most hydrological areas in Wessex received notably low rainfall with only 4 exceptions. These areas are all in the north of Wessex and received below normal rainfall in April. The lowest cumulative rainfall was recorded in Poole Harbour and Purbeck which received 12mm (20% LTA). The highest relative rainfall was recorded in the Yeo and Kenn area which received 27mm (46% LTA). The past two-month period across the Wessex region has been the 12th driest March and April on record and fifth driest for the Poole Harbour and Purbeck area. Despite a drier than average March and April in the past 3 months most hydrological areas in Wessex received normal rainfall. In the past 6 months the majority of hydrological regions recorded exceptionally high rainfall. Over the past 12 months, hydrological areas to the north of Wessex received normal to above normal rainfall. In the south of Wessex, hydrological areas received above normal to notably high rainfall.

1.2 Soil moisture

SMD has risen across the Wessex region in response to the low rainfall and is now at a marginally higher level than in 2025 and close to the historic maximum. At the end of April, most hydrological areas recorded an SMD of between 41-70mm. Some catchments in south Wessex recorded a greater SMD of between 71 to 100mm. SMD at the end of April (reported up to 28th April) was between 26 to 50mm greater than the LTA for most hydrological areas.

The exception to this was the Mendips and River Chew area which recorded a SMD between 6 to 25mm greater than the LTA.

1.3 River flows

In April river flows fell across the entire Wessex region in response to the drier weather. Most flow monitoring sites in the north recorded below normal monthly mean flows with the Bristol Frome at Frenchay reporting as exceptionally low. In contrast the majority of monthly mean flows were normal in the south of Wessex due to the supporting baseflow from the Chalk aquifer. River flows for both surface water and groundwater dominated catchments have fallen steadily across the month with surface water catchments responding temporarily to rainfall around 15 April.

1.4 Groundwater levels

Groundwater levels fell across all of Wessex in April in response to the low rainfall. At the end of the month most monitoring sites reported normal levels. In the north, groundwater levels at Allington and Didmarton (monitoring the Greater and Inferior Oolite respectively) both fell steadily across the month but Didmarton is still reporting notably high levels. Groundwater levels in the west and south of Wessex, including in the Chalk aquifer, fell throughout April with Chipley (monitoring the Otter Sandstone) reporting below normal levels by the end of the month.

1.5 Reservoir stocks

Both Wessex Water and Bristol Reservoir levels have fallen through April though remain higher than in 2025. The combined levels at the end of the month for Wessex Water were approximately 94% capacity. For Bristol Water the combined levels were approximately 93% capacity.

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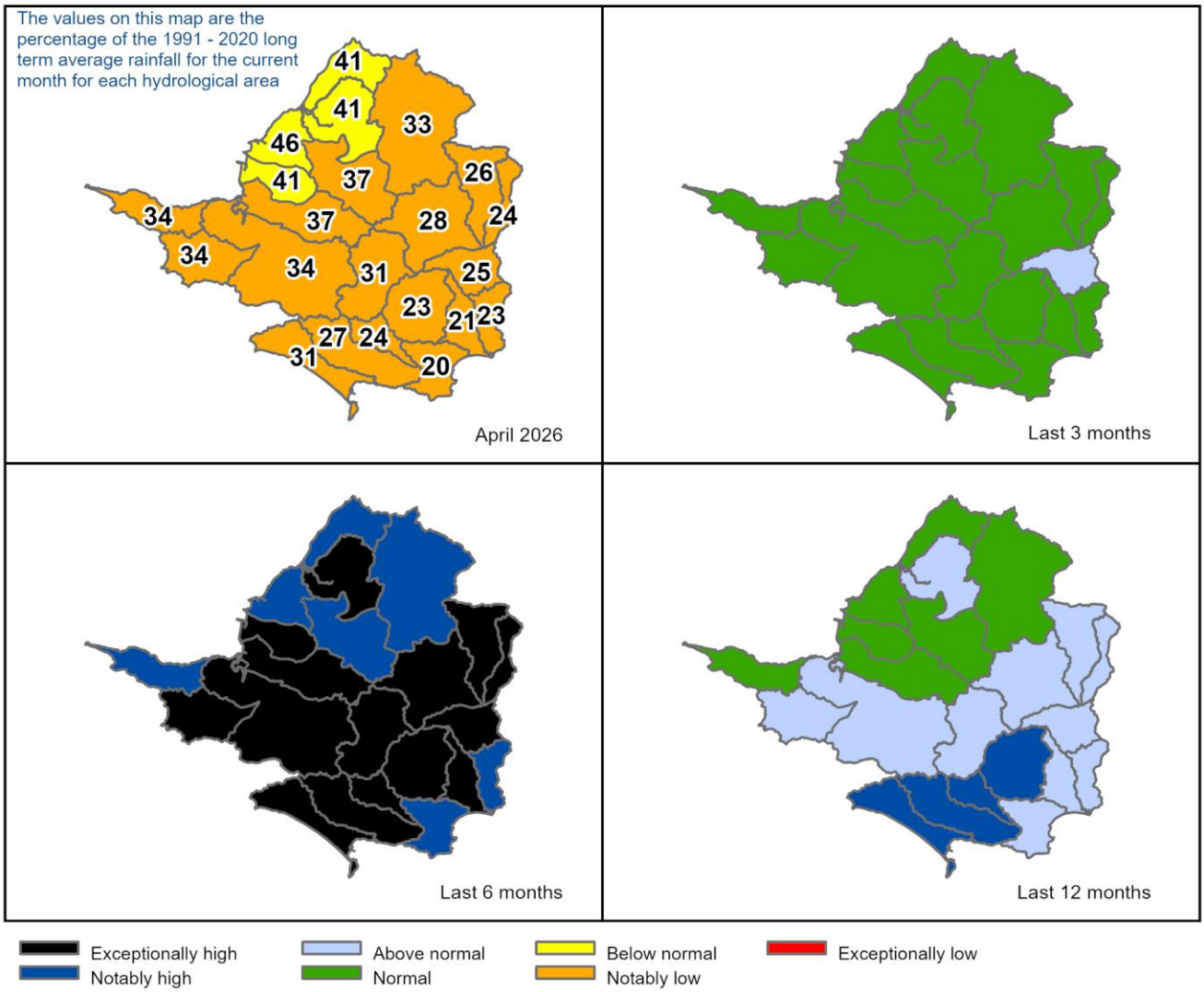
2 Rainfall

2.1 Rainfall map

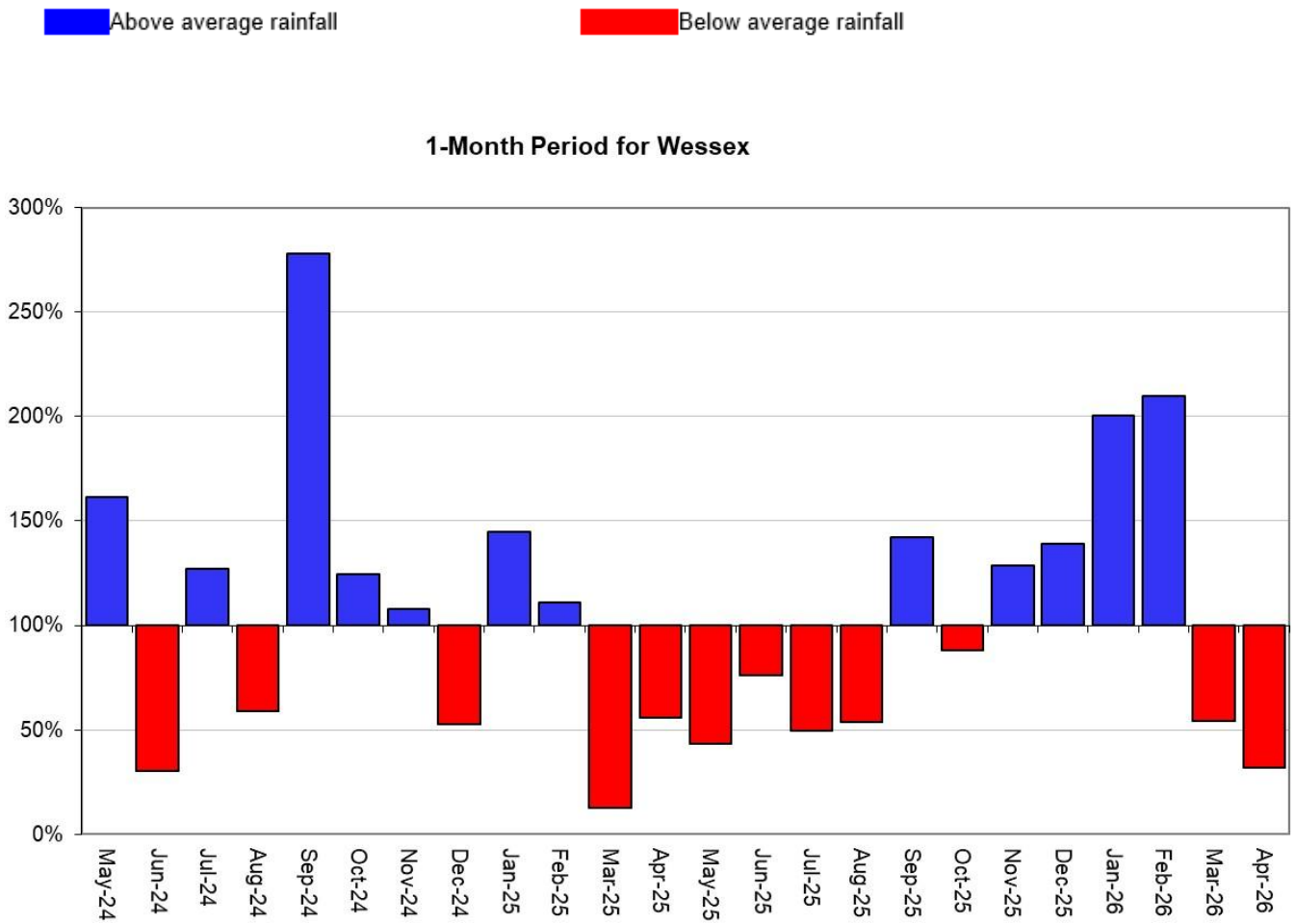
Figure 2.1: Total rainfall for hydrological areas for the current month (up to 30 April 2026), the last 3 months, the last 6 months, and the last 12 months, classed relative to an analysis of respective historic totals between 1991 and 2020. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.



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.

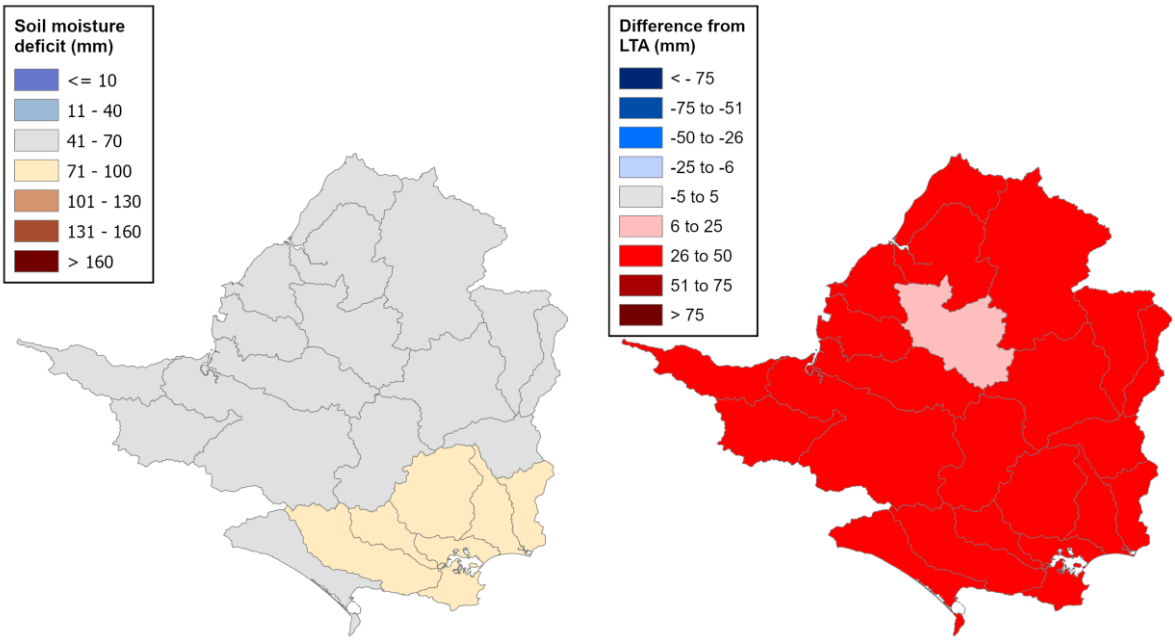


Rainfall data for January 2025 onwards, extracted from Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges. (Source: Environment Agency. Crown Copyright, 100024198, 2026). Rainfall data prior to January 2025, extracted from Met Office HadUK 1km gridded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

3 Soil moisture deficit

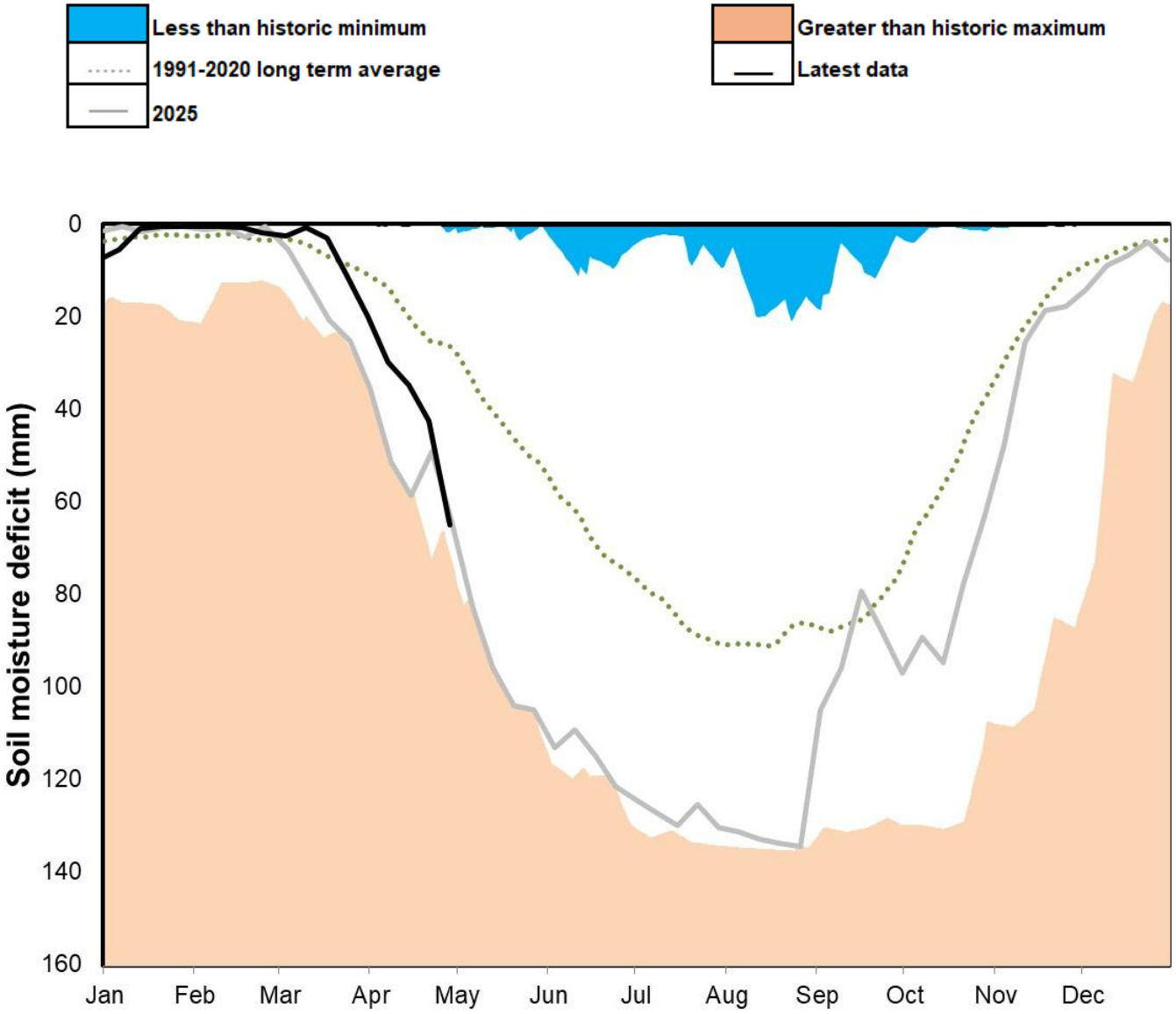
3.1 Soil moisture deficit map

Figure 3.1: Soil moisture deficits for weeks ending 30 April 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

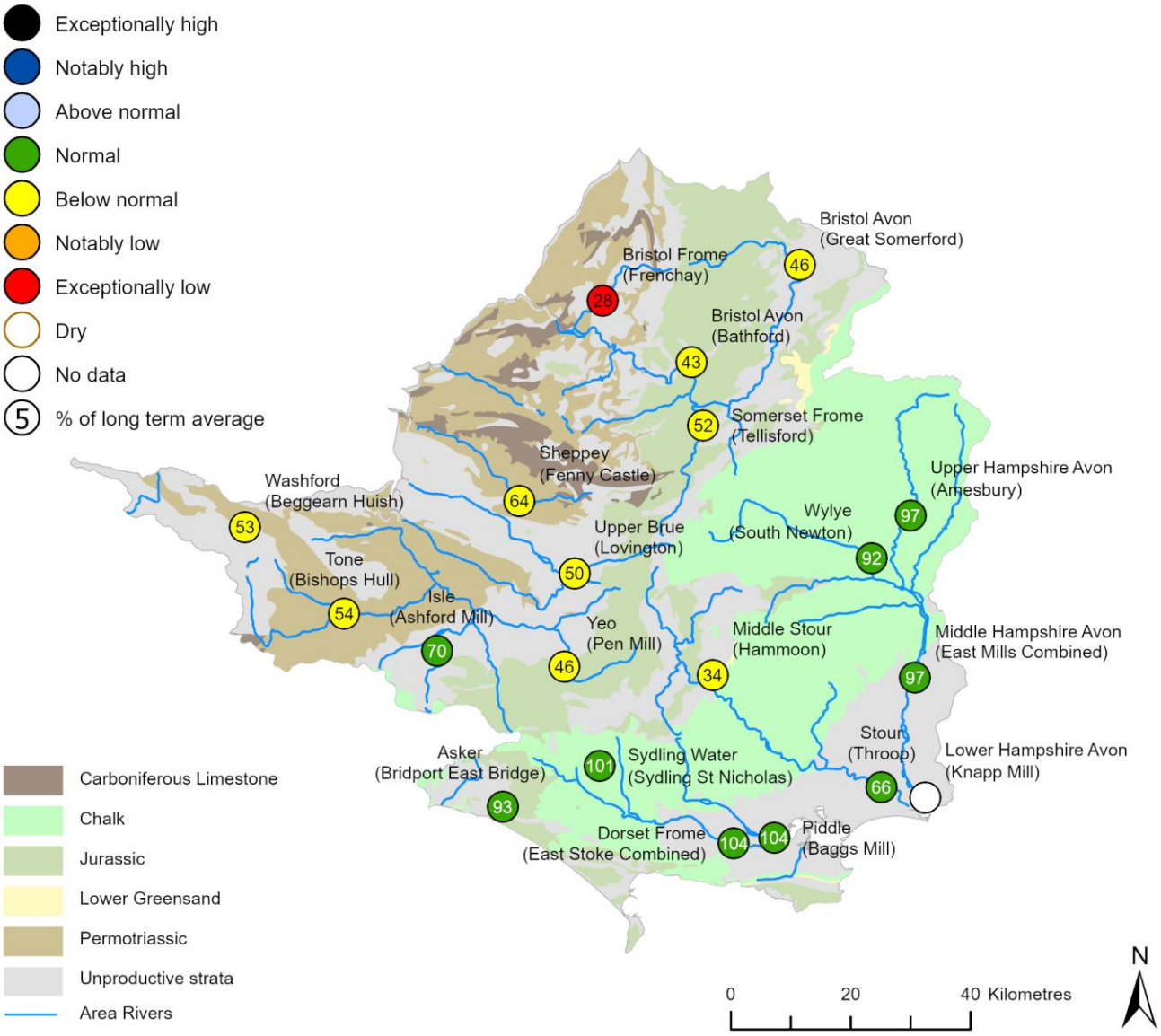
Figure 3.2: Latest soil moisture deficit compared to previous year, maximum, minimum, and 1991 to 2020 long term average. Weekly MORECS data for real land use.



4 River flows

4.1 River flows map

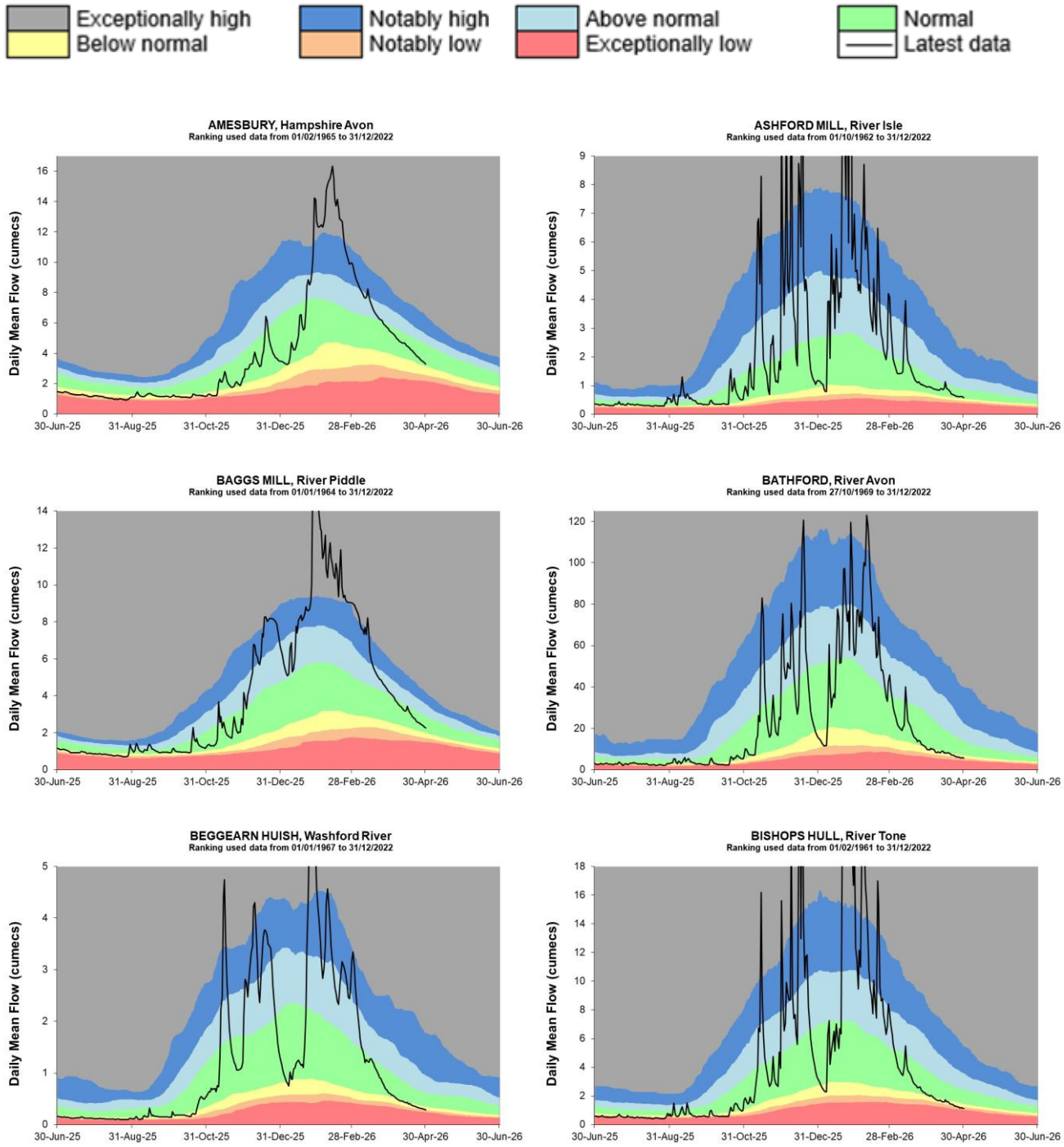
Figure 4.1: Monthly mean river flow for indicator sites for April 2026, expressed as a percentage of the respective long term average and classed relative to an analysis of historic April monthly means Table available in the appendices with detailed information.



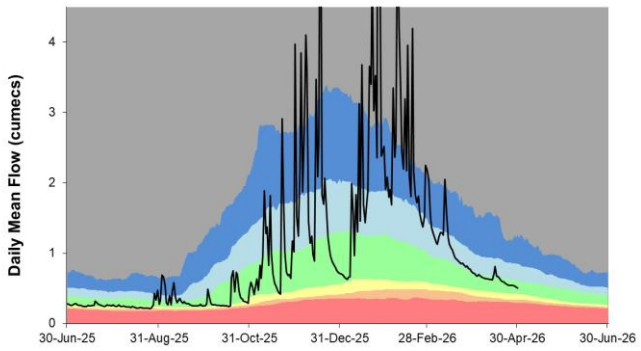
(Source: Environment Agency). Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, AC0000807064, 2026. The Stour at Throop, Dorset Frome at East Stoke and Asker at Bridport East Bridge should be treated with caution. The Hampshire Avon at Knapp Mill is omitted due to data issues.

4.2 River flow charts

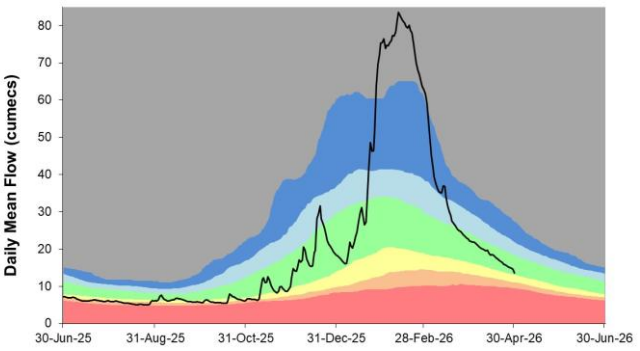
Figure 4.2: Daily mean river flow for index sites over the past year, compared to an analysis of historic daily mean flows.



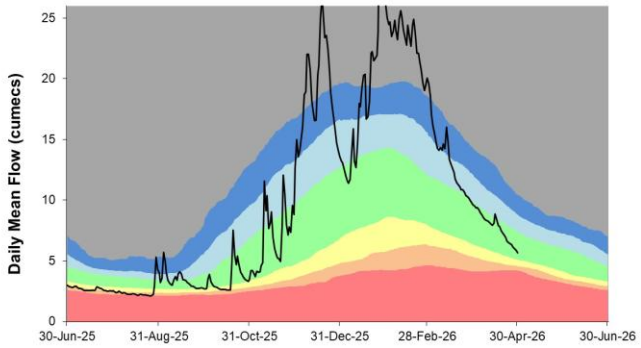
BRIDPORT EAST BRIDGE, River Asker
Ranking used data from 01/03/1996 to 31/12/2022



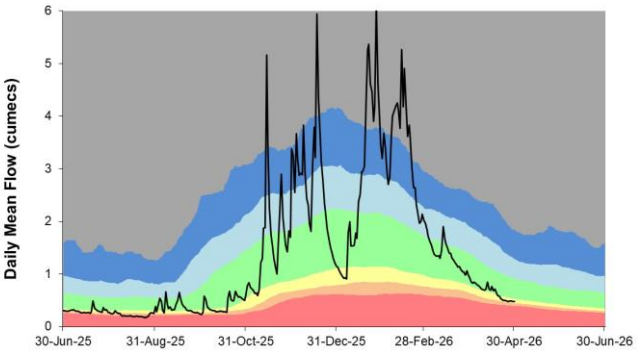
EAST MILLS COMBINED, Hampshire Avon
Ranking used data from 01/11/1965 to 31/12/2022



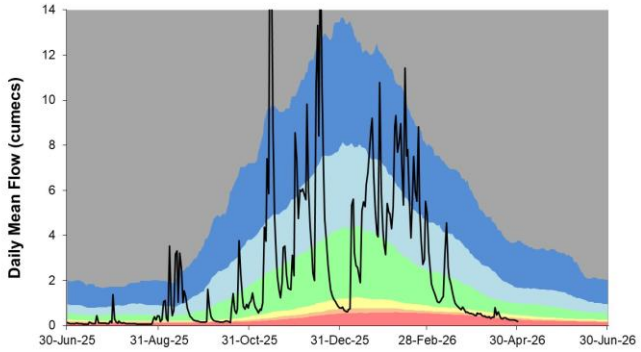
EAST STOKE COMBINED, Dorset Frome
Ranking used data from 01/10/1965 to 31/12/2022



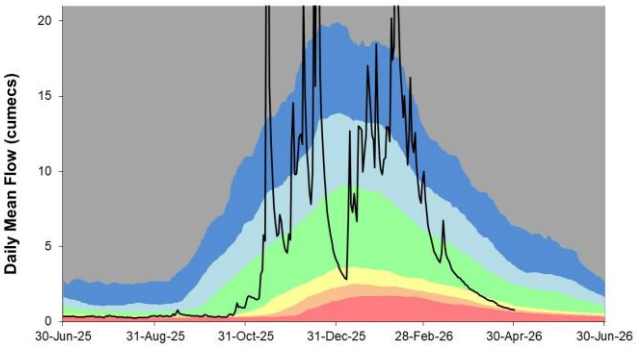
FENNY CASTLE , River Sheppey
Ranking used data from 01/01/1964 to 31/12/2022



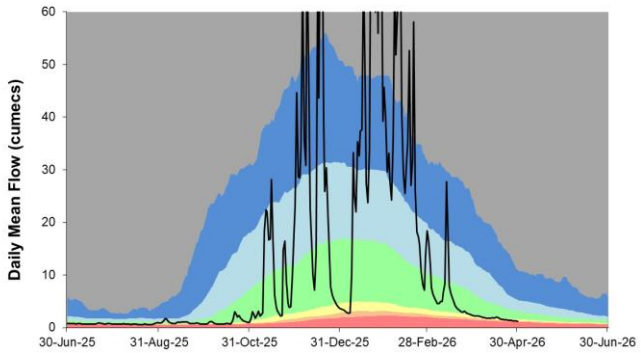
FRENCHAY, Bristol Frome
Ranking used data from 01/09/1961 to 31/12/2022



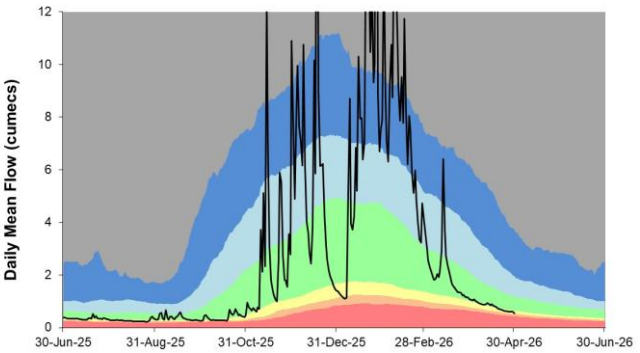
GREAT SOMERFORD, River Avon
Ranking used data from 16/12/1963 to 31/12/2022

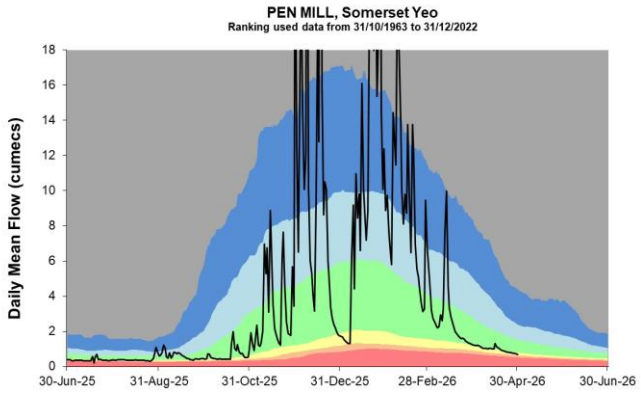


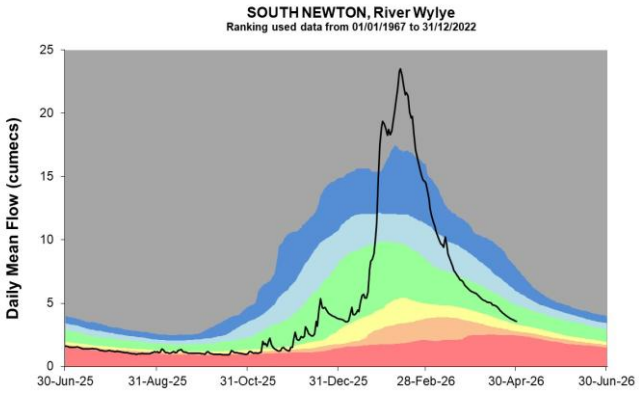
HAMMOON, River Stour
Ranking used data from 01/03/1968 to 31/12/2022

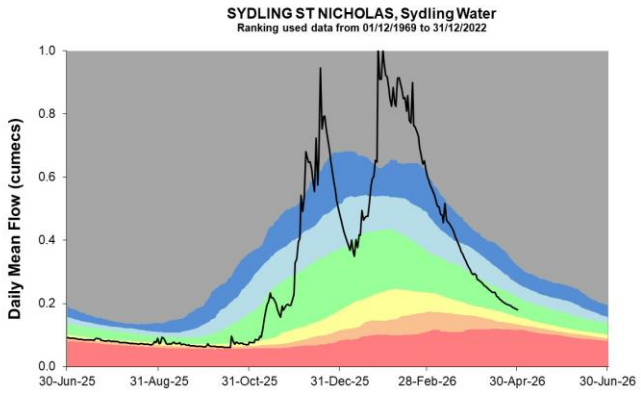


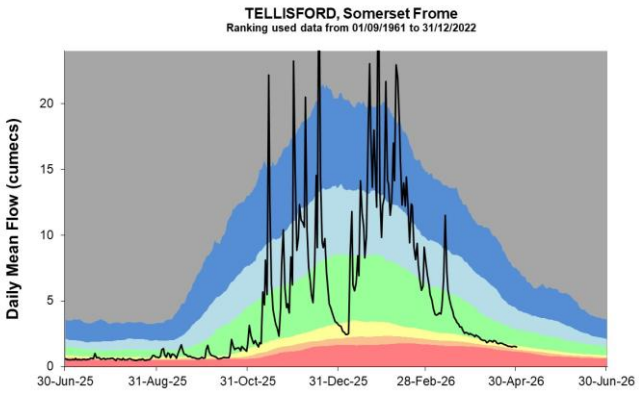
LOVINGTON, River Brue
Ranking used data from 01/10/1964 to 31/12/2022

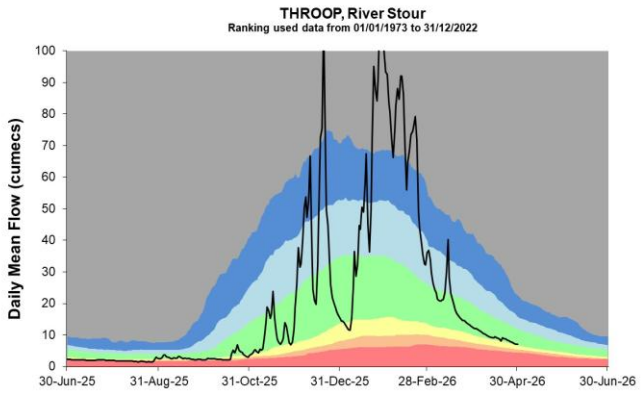










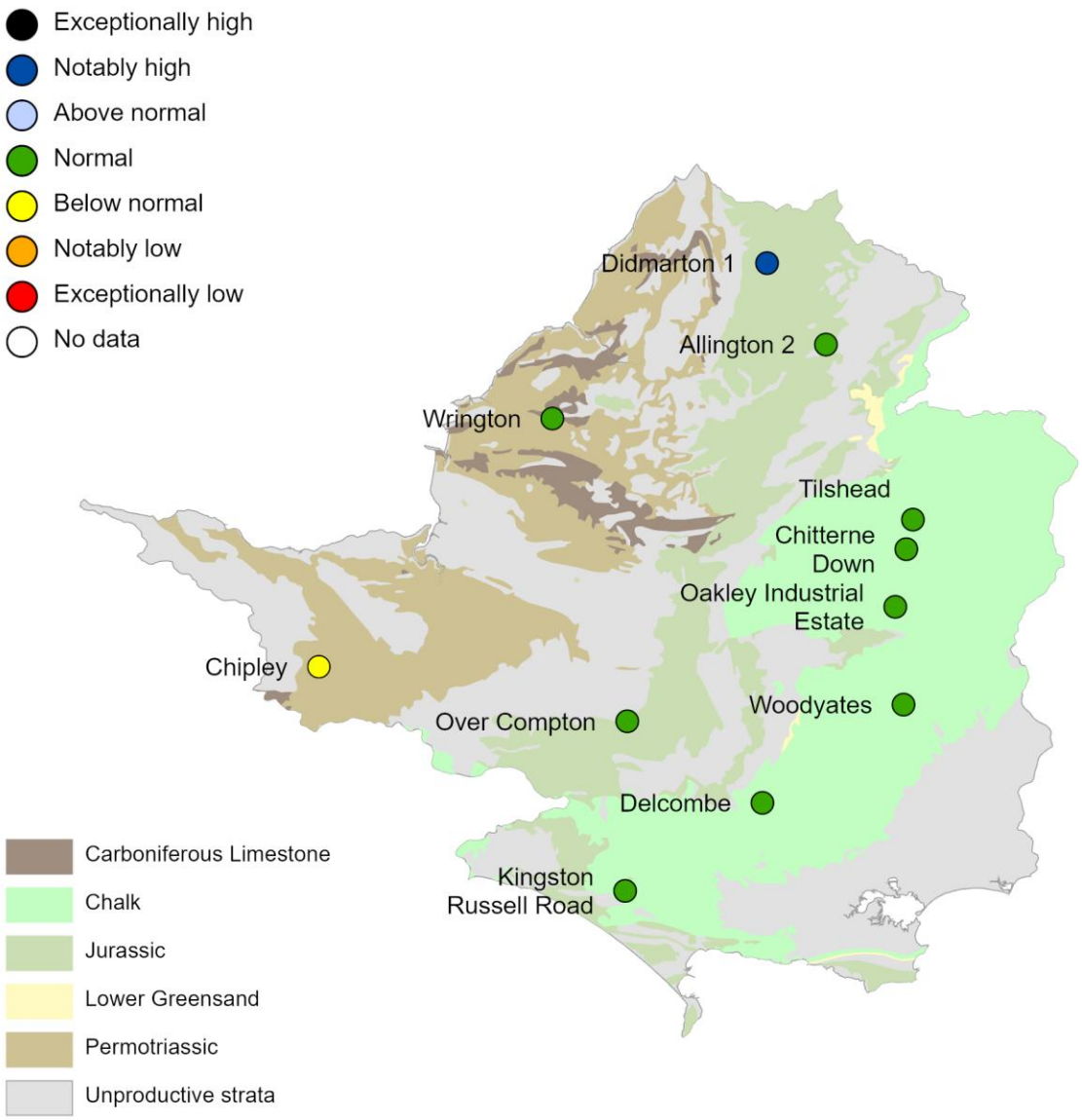


Source: Environment Agency, 2026. The Stour at Throop, Dorset Frome at East Stoke and Asker at Bridport East Bridge should be treated with caution. The Hampshire Avon at Knapp Mill is omitted due to data issues.

5 Groundwater levels

5.1 Groundwater levels map

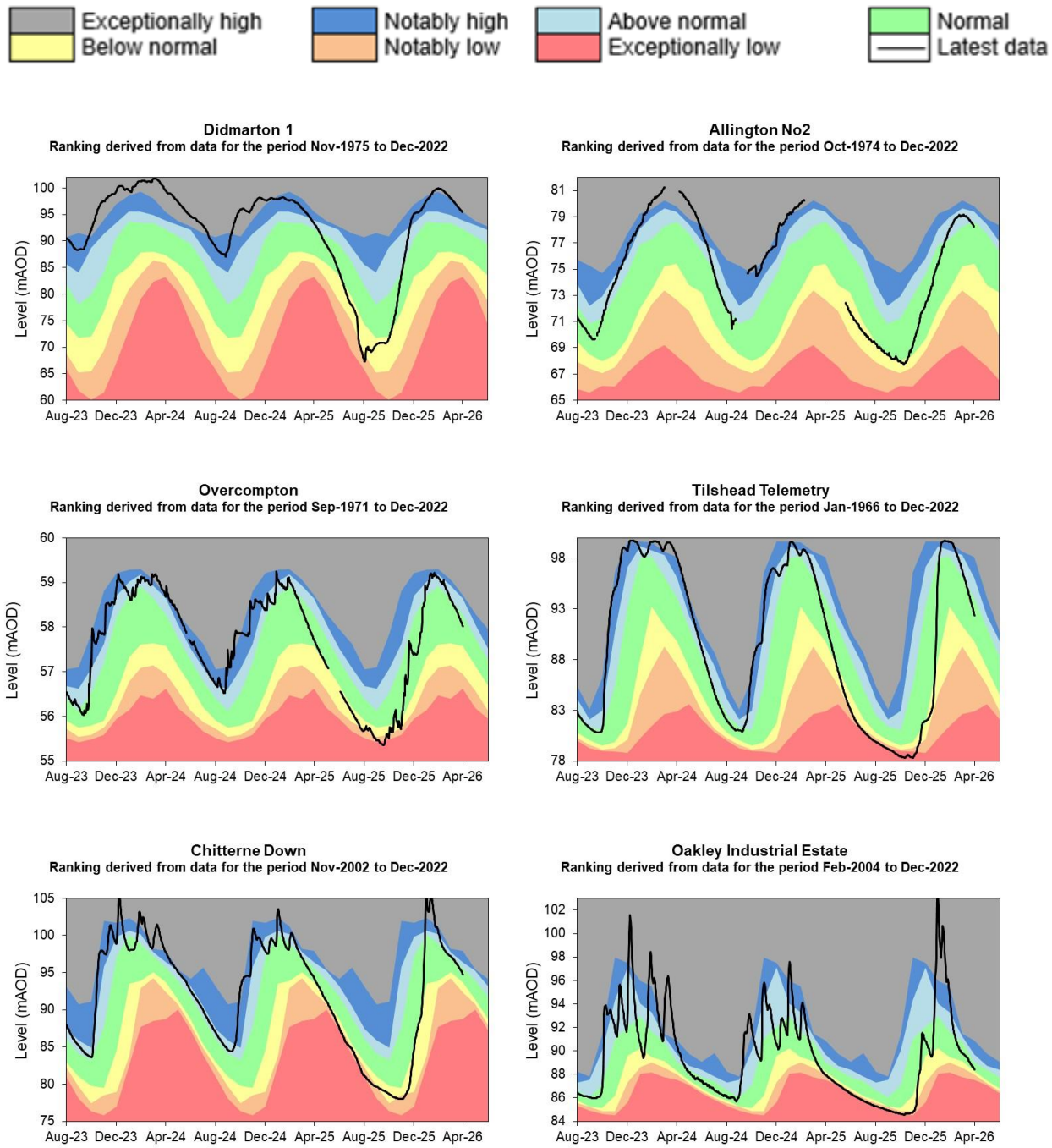
Figure 5.1: Groundwater levels for indicator sites at the end of April 2026, classed relative to an analysis of respective historic April levels. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.

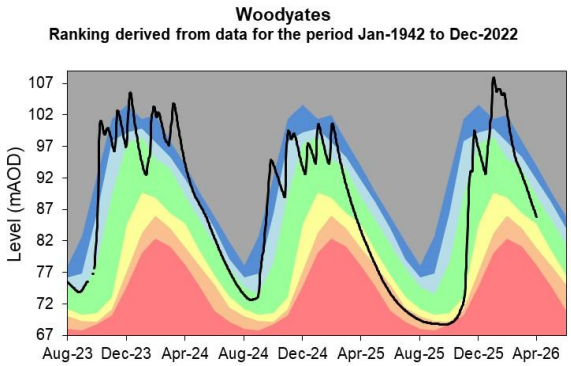


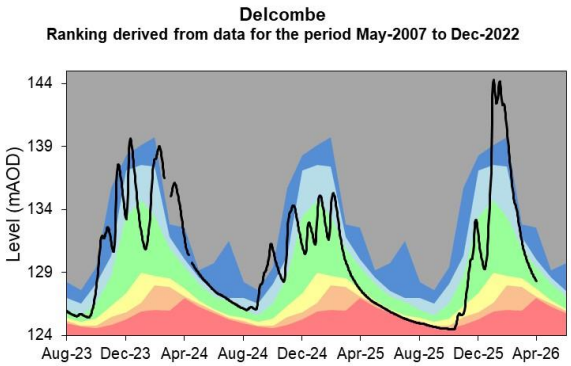
(Source: Environment Agency). Geological map reproduced with kind permission from UK Groundwater Forum, BGS copyright NERC. Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, AC0000807064, 2026.

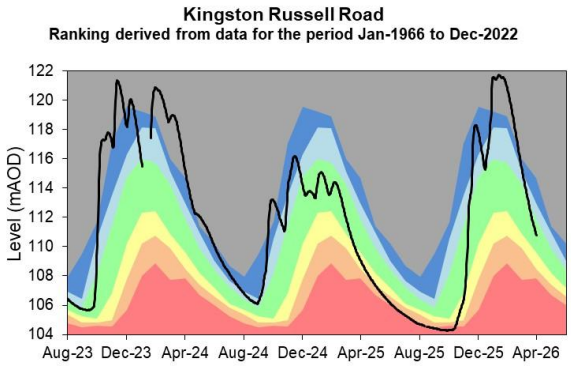
5.2 Groundwater level charts

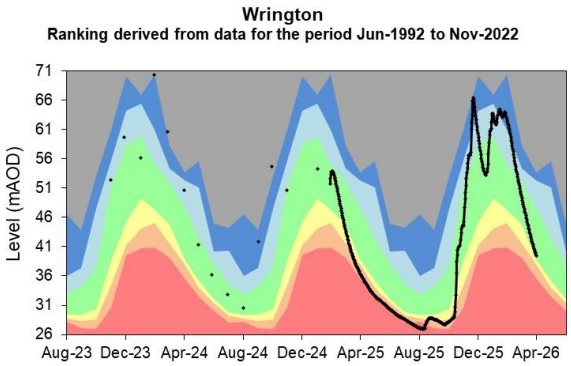
Figure 5.2: End of month groundwater levels at index groundwater level sites for major aquifers. 34 months compared to an analysis of historic end of month levels.

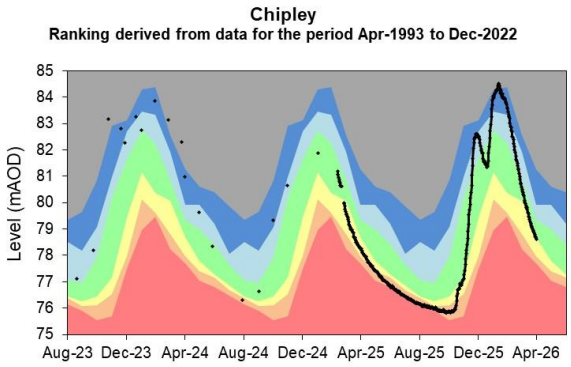








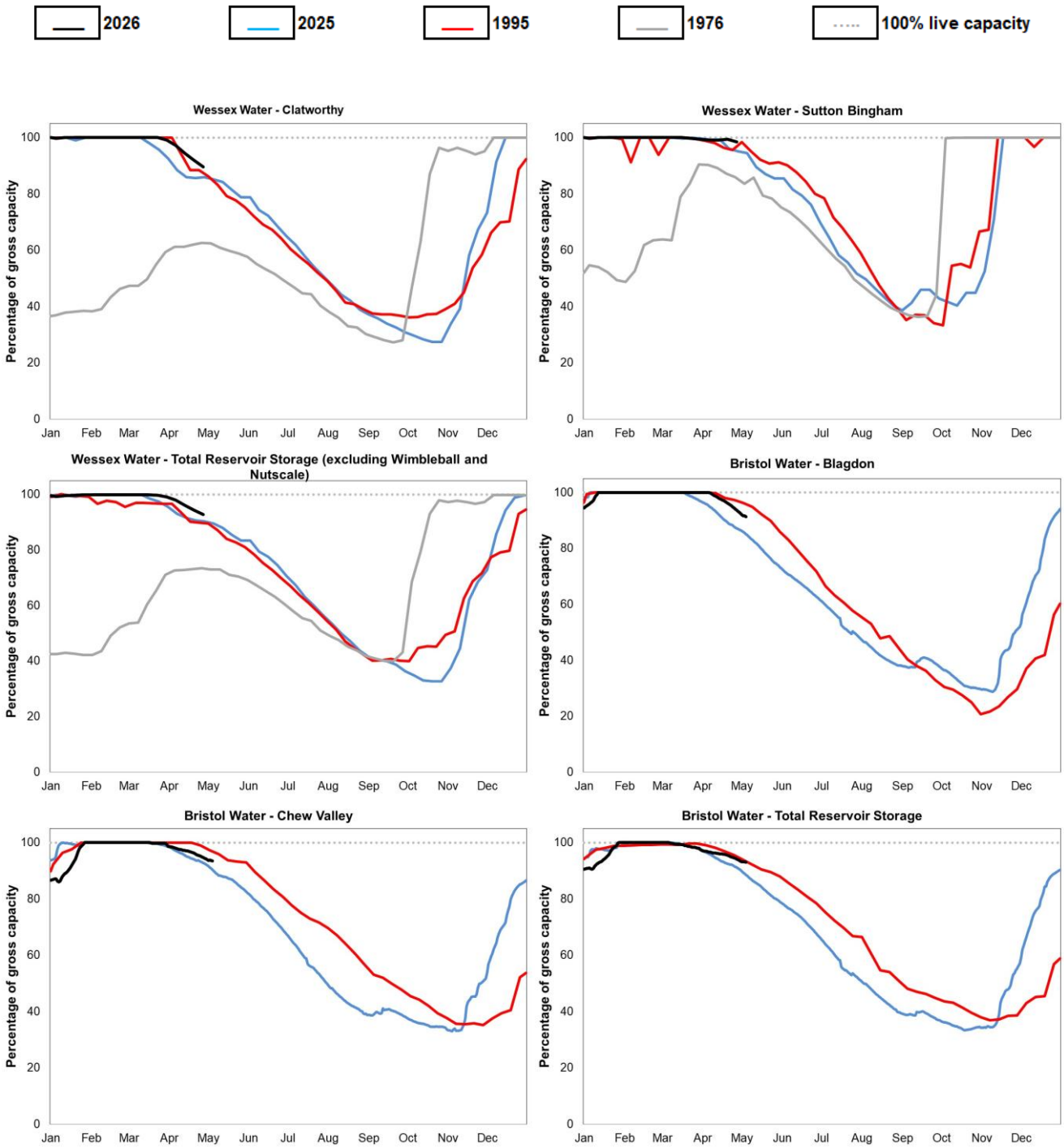




Source: Environment Agency, 2026.

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 April

Area	Number of fluvial flood alerts in April	Number of coastal flood alerts in April	Number of groundwater flood alerts in April
North Wessex	0	5	0
South Wessex	0	0	0

7.2 Flood warnings

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

Area	Number of fluvial flood warnings in April	Number of coastal flood warnings in April	Number of groundwater flood warnings in April
North Wessex	0	1	0
South Wessex	0	0	0

7.3 Severe flood warnings

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

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

8 Stream support

8.1 Sites providing stream support

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

Catchment	River	Stream support site	Gauging station	End of April 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	On
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 April 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 April

Catchment	Number of licences at restrict at the end of April	Number of licences at cease at the end of April
Bristol Avon	0	0
Dorset	0	0
Hampshire Avon	0	4
Somerset	1	2

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

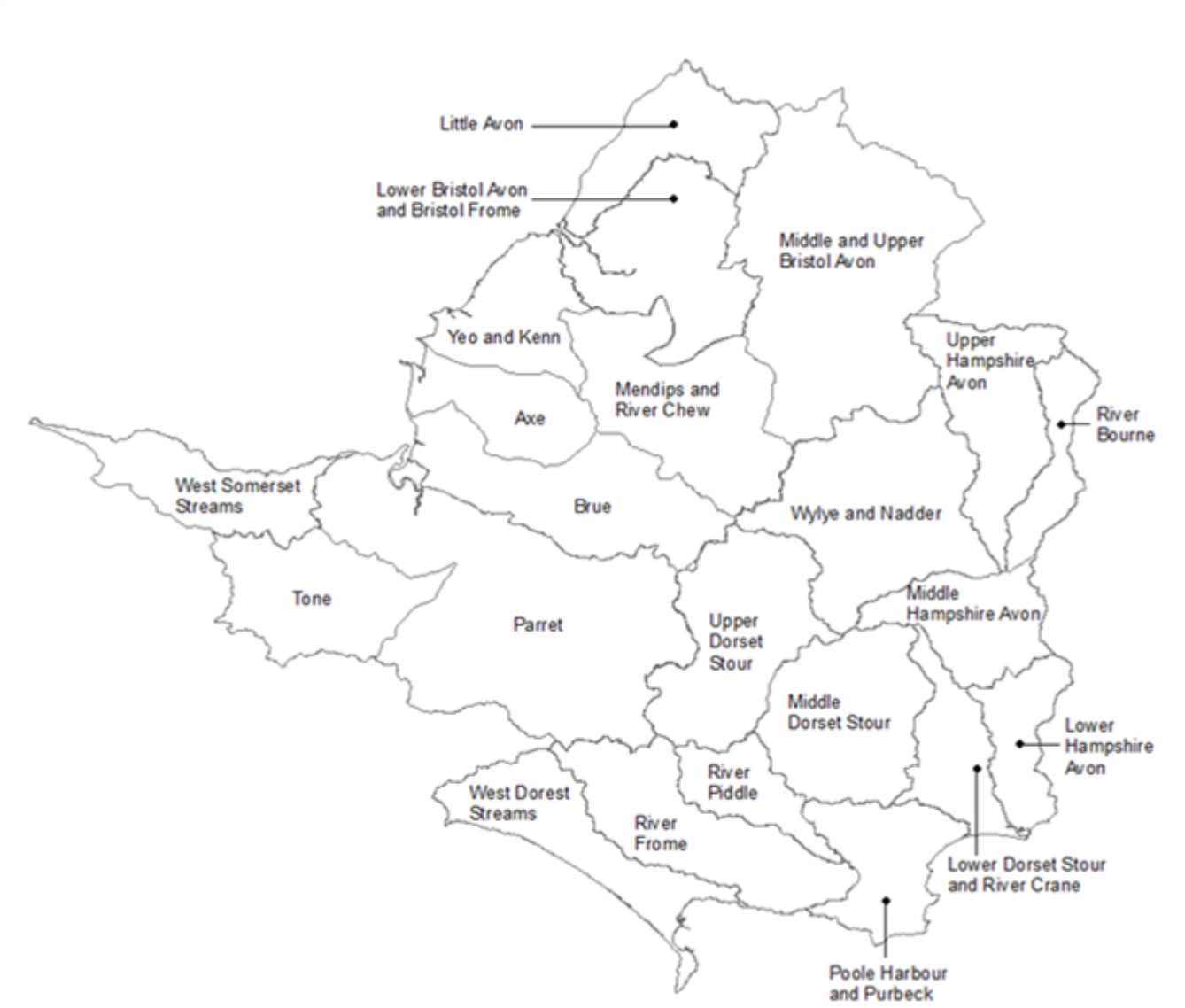
Value likely to fall within this band 8% of the time.

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	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
Axe	41	Below Normal	Normal	Exceptionally high	Normal
Brue	37	Notably Low	Normal	Exceptionally high	Normal
Little Avon	41	Below Normal	Normal	Notably high	Normal
Lower Bristol Avon And Bristol Frome	41	Below Normal	Normal	Exceptionally high	Above normal
Lower Dorset Stour And River Crane	21	Notably Low	Normal	Exceptionally high	Above normal
Lower Hampshire Avon	23	Notably Low	Normal	Notably high	Above normal
Mendips And River Chew	37	Notably Low	Normal	Notably high	Normal
Middle And Upper Bristol Avon	33	Notably Low	Normal	Notably high	Normal

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
Middle Dorset Stour	23	Notably Low	Normal	Exceptionally high	Notably high
Middle Hampshire Avon	25	Notably Low	Above normal	Exceptionally high	Above normal
Parrett	34	Notably Low	Normal	Exceptionally high	Above normal
Poole Harbour And Purbeck	20	Notably Low	Normal	Notably high	Above normal
River Bourne	24	Notably Low	Normal	Exceptionally high	Above normal
River Frome	27	Notably Low	Normal	Exceptionally high	Notably high
River Piddle	24	Notably Low	Normal	Exceptionally high	Notably high
Tone	34	Notably Low	Normal	Exceptionally high	Above normal
Upper Dorset Stour	31	Notably Low	Normal	Exceptionally high	Above normal
Upper Hampshire Avon	26	Notably Low	Normal	Exceptionally high	Above normal

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
West Dorset Streams	31	Notably Low	Normal	Exceptionally high	Notably high
West Somerset Streams	34	Notably Low	Normal	Notably high	Normal
Wylye And Nadder	28	Notably Low	Normal	Exceptionally high	Above normal
Yeo And Kenn	46	Below Normal	Normal	Notably high	Normal

11.2 River flows table

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

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

11.3 Groundwater table

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