

# Monthly water situation report: Wessex Area

## 1 Summary - May 2026

The dry weather continued in May 2026, with an average of 38 mm of rain falling across Wessex, 64% of the long term average (LTA). The majority of the month was dry with the largest rainfall event occurring on 18 May. Across the whole of Wessex, the last 4 months have been the seventh driest for this period on record, with it being the third driest of these 4 months on record for the Yeo and Kenn, and Little Avon catchments. Soil moisture deficit (SMD) rose through May in response to the low rainfall and ended the month at similar levels to 2025. Monthly mean flows continued to fall through out May, with a temporary response to rainfall around 18 May in surface water dominated catchments. Flows were predominantly notably low and below normal in the north of Wessex, with normal flows to the south-west of the patch and below normal and notably low flows to the east of Wessex. Groundwater levels continued to fall across Wessex in May. At the end of the month, most sites reported normal levels across Wessex, with 4 sites below normal, and 1 site, Didmarton 1 (monitoring the Inferior Oolite), recording above normal groundwater levels. At the end of May reservoir levels for Wessex Water and Bristol Water were at approximately 83% and 86% capacity respectively.

### 1.1 Rainfall

An average of 38 mm of rain fell across Wessex in May, 64% of the LTA. The month started and ended with very dry conditions, with 95% of the total monthly rain falling from 11 to 20 May, with the largest rainfall event occurring on 18 May. From north-east to south-east of Wessex rainfall was below normal, with the exception of The Upper Hampshire Avon catchment which was notably low. In the north-west and west of Wessex rainfall was predominantly normal across the hydrological areas. The highest total monthly rainfall was recorded in the Little Avon catchment with an average of 54 mm, 87% LTA. The lowest total monthly rainfall was reported in the Upper Hampshire Avon catchment with 23 mm, 43% LTA. Across the whole of Wessex, the last 4-month period (February to May) has been the seventh driest on record. It has also been the third driest 4-month period on record for both the Yeo and Kenn catchment and the Little Avon catchment. With the continuation of dry weather through May, the last 3 months shows most hydrological areas with notably low rainfall with exceptionally low rainfall to the south-east of Wessex. In the past 6 months, after a wet winter, the hydrological areas to the south west show exceptionally high rainfall, with notably high rainfall recorded across Wessex, with the north and north west having above normal levels of rainfall. The last 12 months show above normal levels of rainfall to the south with notably high rainfall to the south west. In the north of Wessex, the majority of hydrological sites recorded normal amounts of rainfall.

## 1.2 Soil moisture

SMD continued to rise across Wessex for the majority of May, nearing the historic maximum in mid-May, and ending the month close to 2025 levels, before beginning to decrease into the next month. By the end of the month all hydrological areas across Wessex, bar 1, had SMD levels between 71 to 100 mm, the exception being the River Bourne catchment in the east of Wessex where there were higher levels of SMD between 101 to 130 mm. SMD by the end of the month was 26 to 50 mm greater than the LTA for all hydrological areas.

## 1.3 River flows

River flows continued to fall in May across the majority of Wessex in response to the continuing dry weather. Most reporting sites in the north recorded notably low monthly mean flows, with the Bristol Frome at Frenchay reporting an increase in flows to below normal. In the south of Wessex normal monthly mean flows were reported at 3 sites, with the Dorset Frome at East Stoke Combined reporting below normal flows, and notably low monthly mean flows on the Stour at both Throop and Hammoon. River flows across the Chalk aquifer in the east of Wessex reported as below normal, with monthly mean flows in the west of Wessex reporting as mainly notably low, with below normal flows on the Washford at Beggearn Huish and normal flows on the Isle at Ashford Mill. While all catchments showed a falling river flow trend throughout the month, surface water catchments showed a temporary response to a rainfall event around 18 May.

## 1.4 Groundwater levels

Groundwater levels continued to fall across all of Wessex in May due to the continuation of dry weather. By the end of the month, the majority of monitoring sites across Wessex reported normal groundwater levels. Of the 4 monitoring sites reporting below normal levels, 2 of these were at sites monitoring the Chalk aquifer towards the east of Wessex, Oakley Industrial Estate and Woodyates. The remaining 2 sites reporting below normal levels were to the west and north of Wessex at Chipley (monitoring the Otter Sandstone) and Wrington (monitoring the Carboniferous Limestone). In the north of Wessex, 1 site reported above normal levels at Didmarton 1 (monitoring the Inferior Oolite) falling from notably high groundwater levels at the end of April. Monitoring sites in the south of Wessex reported normal levels on the Chalk aquifer.

## 1.5 Reservoir stocks

Reservoir levels have fallen through May for both Bristol Water and Wessex Water. Wessex Water ended the month at approximately 83% capacity, similar to 2025 and higher than 1995. Bristol Water ended the month at approximately 86% capacity, higher than in 2025 and similar to 1995.

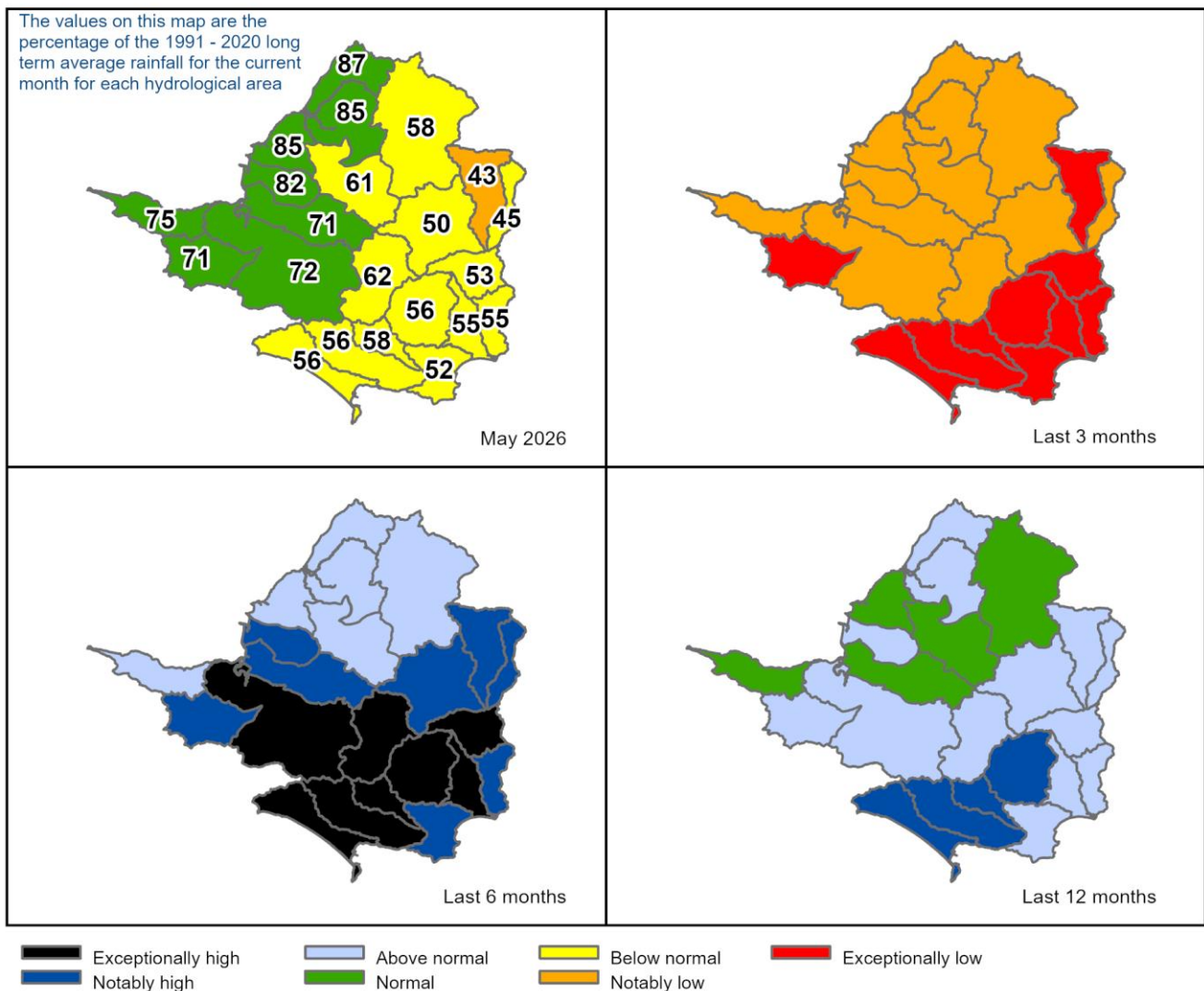
Author: Wessex Hydrology, [hydrology.wessex@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:hydrology.wessex@environment-agency.gov.uk)

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## 2 Rainfall

### 2.1 Rainfall map

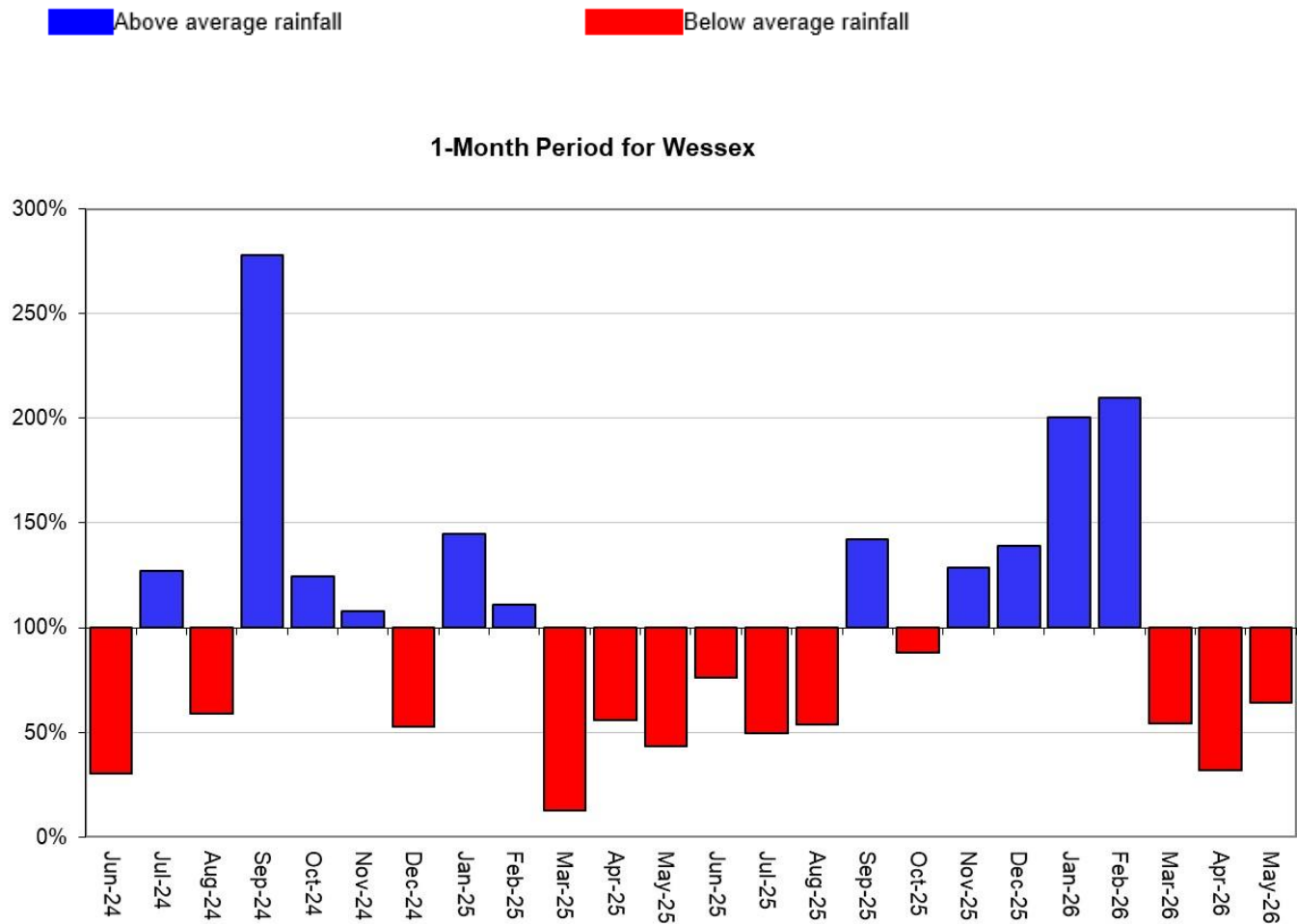
Figure 2.1: Total rainfall for hydrological areas for the current month (up to 31 May 2026), the last 3 months, the last 6 months, and the last 12 months, classed relative to an analysis of respective historic totals between 1991 and 2020. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.



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.

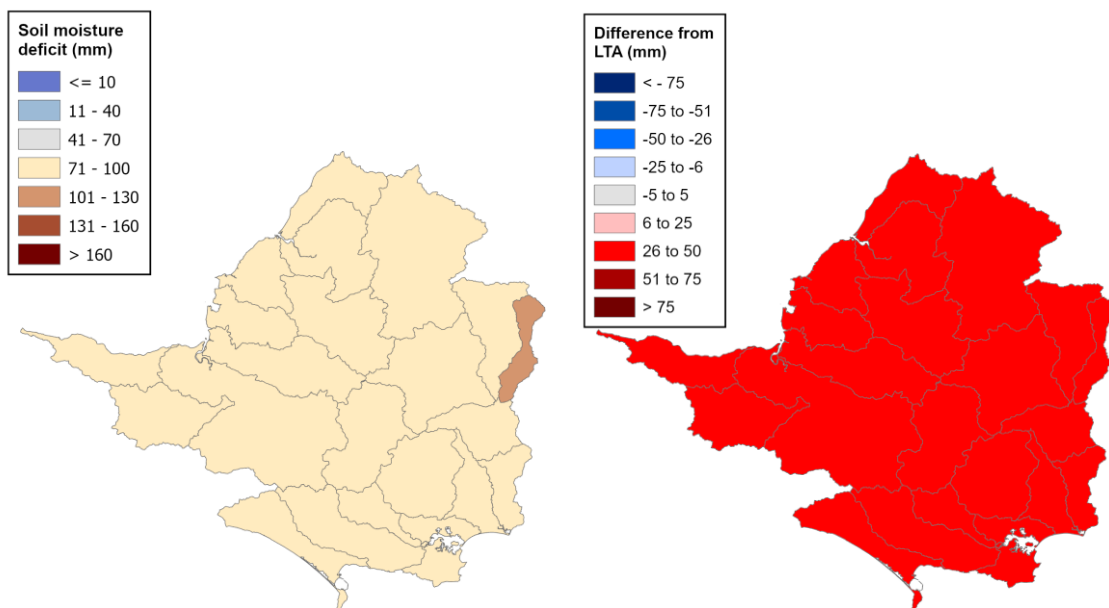


Rainfall data for January 2025 onwards, extracted from Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges. (Source: Environment Agency. Crown Copyright, 100024198, 2026). Rainfall data prior to January 2025, extracted from Met Office HadUK 1km gridded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

### 3 Soil moisture deficit

#### 3.1 Soil moisture deficit map

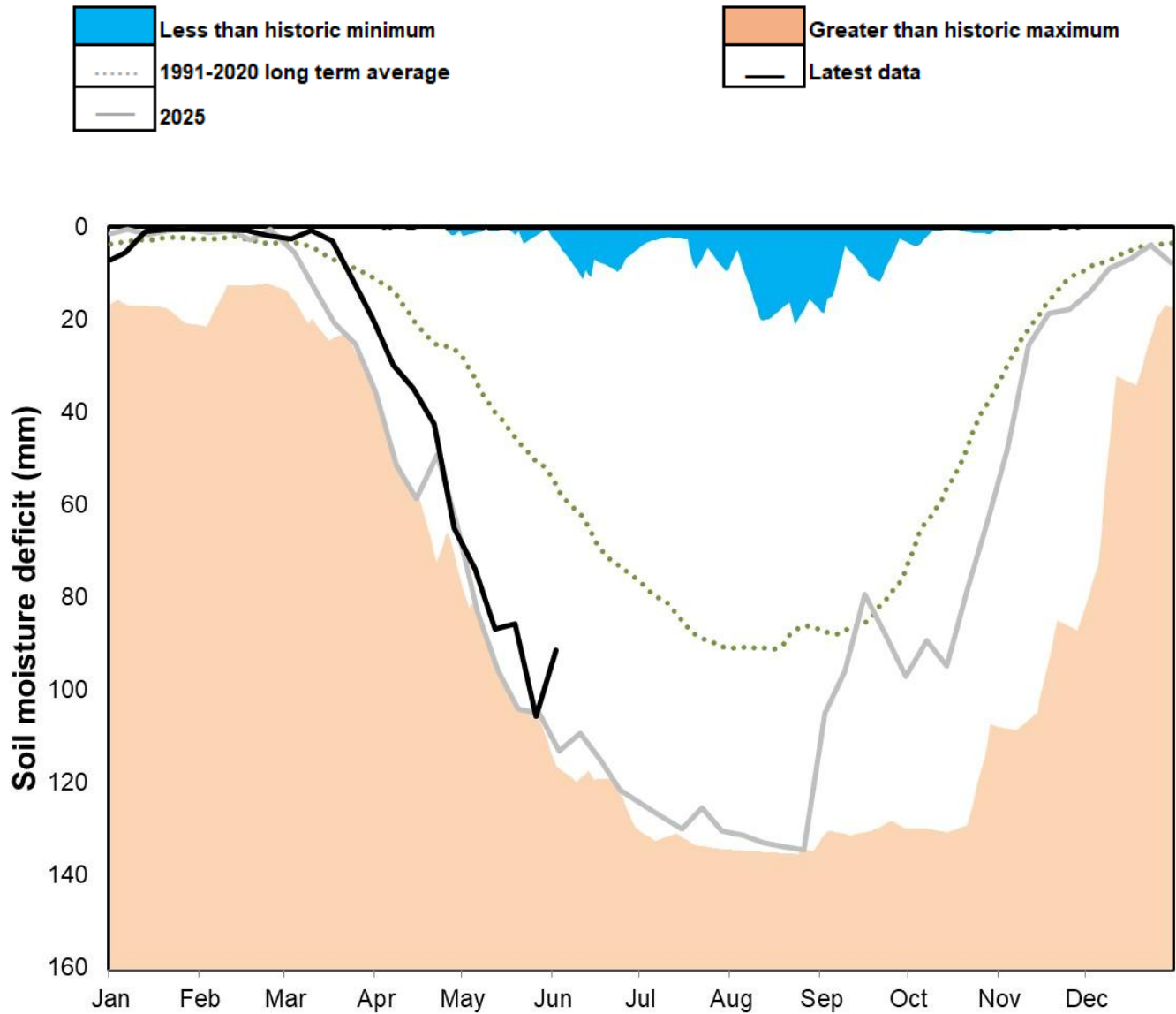
Figure 3.1: Soil moisture deficits for weeks ending 31 May 2026. Shows the difference (mm) of the actual soil moisture deficit from the 1991 to 2020 long term average soil moisture deficits. MORECS data for real land use.



(Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026). All rights reserved. Environment Agency, AC0000807064, 2026.

### 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.

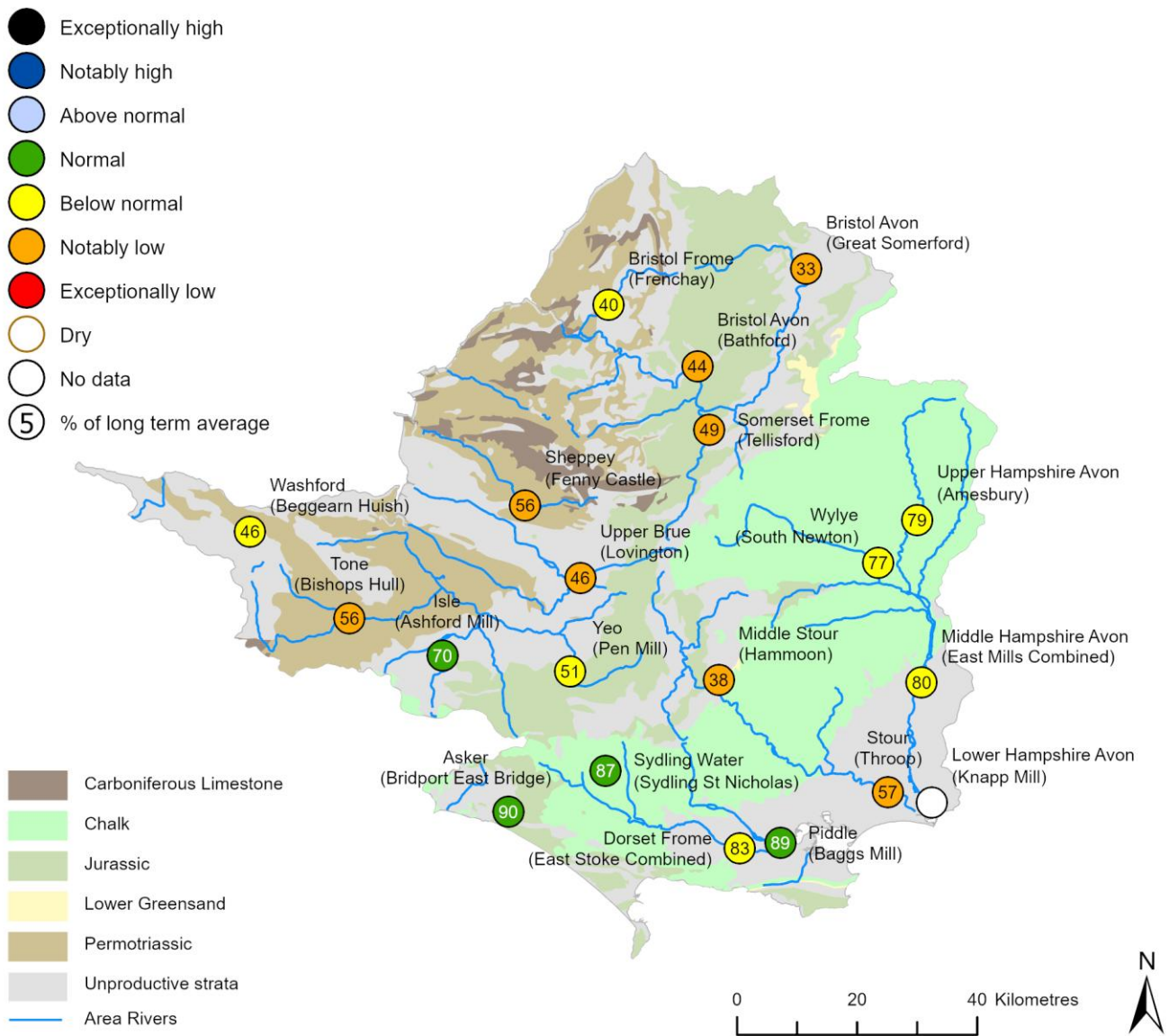


(Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026). All rights reserved. Environment Agency, 100024198, 2026

# 4 River flows

## 4.1 River flows map

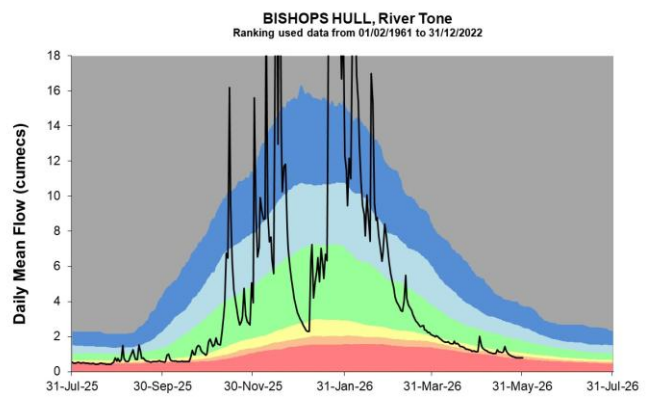
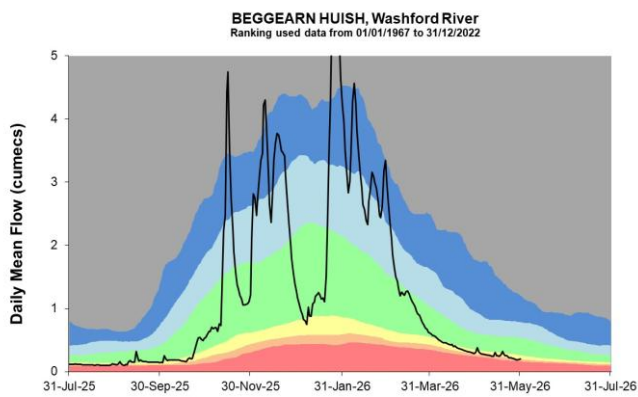
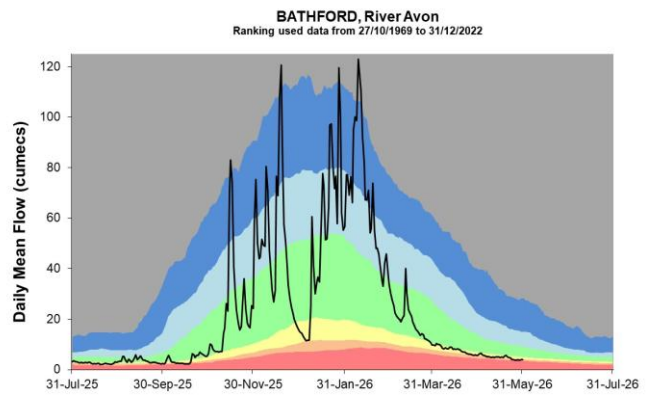
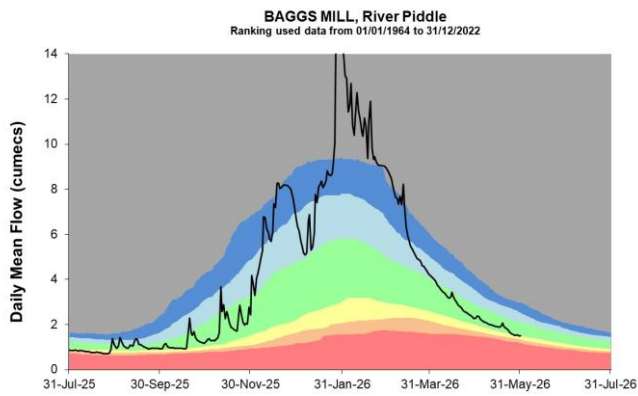
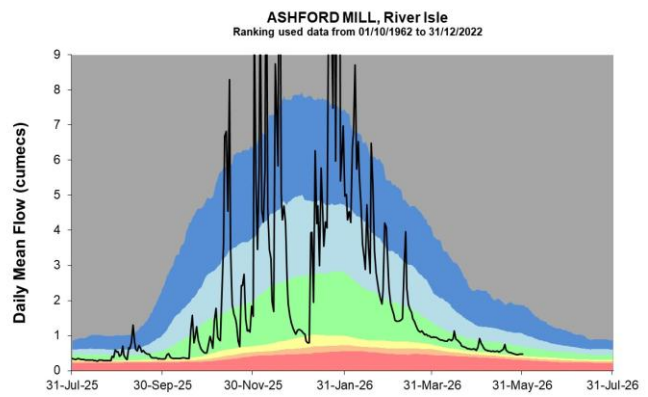
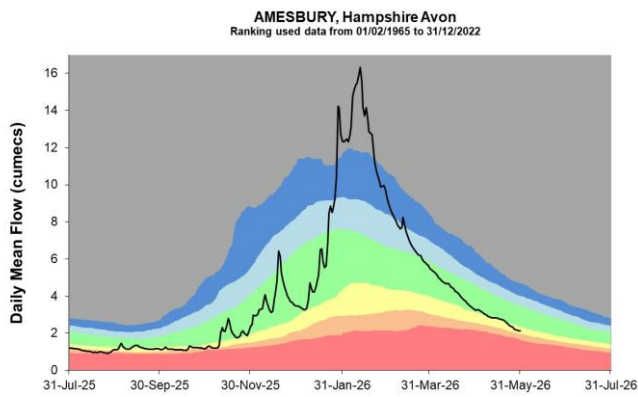
Figure 4.1: Monthly mean river flow for indicator sites for May 2026, expressed as a percentage of the respective long term average and classed relative to an analysis of historic May monthly means Table available in the appendices with detailed information.



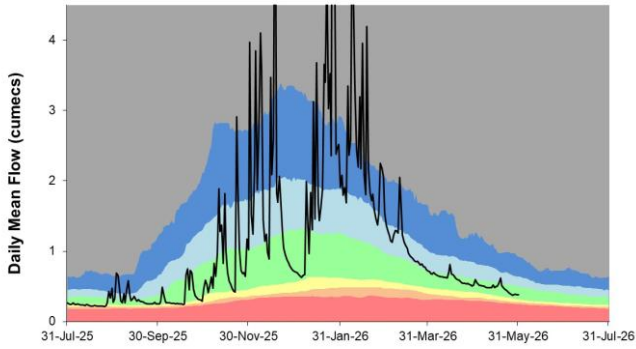
(Source: Environment Agency). Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, AC0000807064, 2026. Flow data at Knapp Mill on the Hampshire Avon is omitted due to data issues. Flow data at Throop on the Stour should be treated with caution

## 4.2 River flow charts

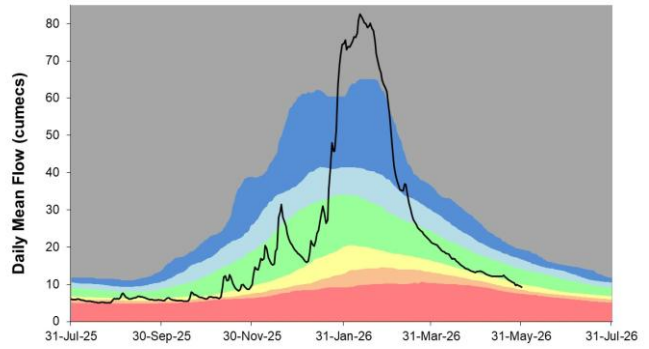
Figure 4.2: Daily mean river flow for index sites over the past year, compared to an analysis of historic daily mean flows.



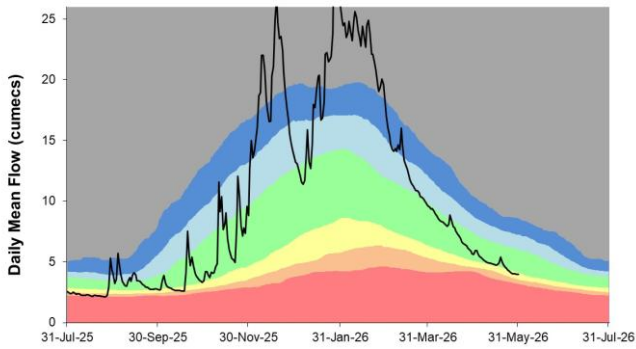
**BRIDPORTEAST BRIDGE, River Asker**  
Ranking used data from 01/03/1996 to 31/12/2022



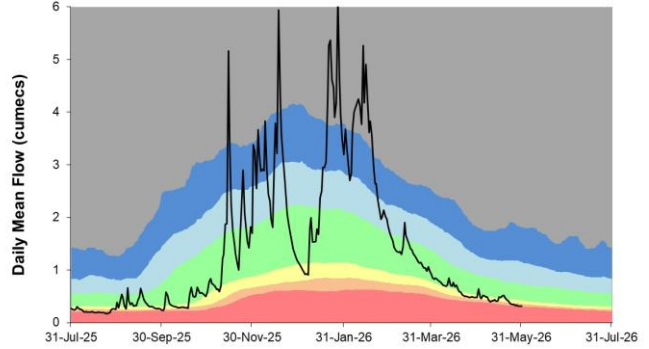
**EAST MILLS COMBINED, Hampshire Avon**  
Ranking used data from 01/11/1965 to 31/12/2022



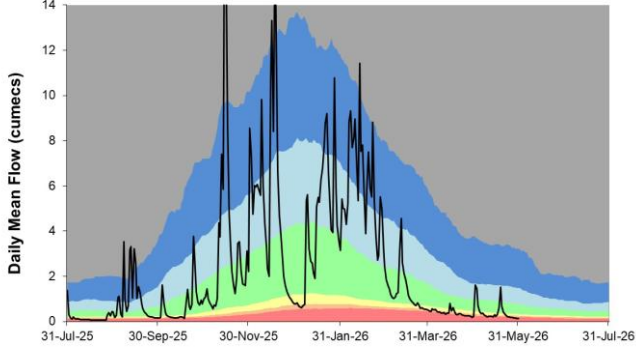
**EAST STOKE COMBINED, Dorset Frome**  
Ranking used data from 01/10/1965 to 31/12/2022



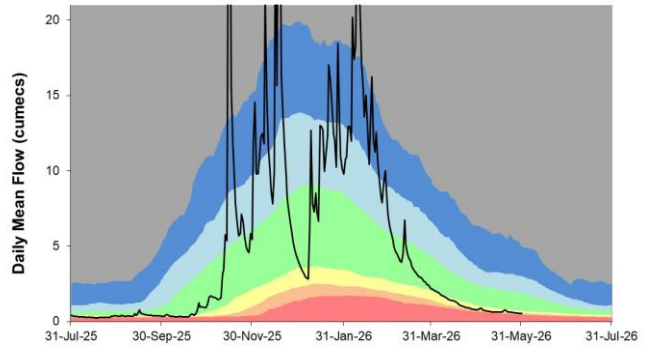
**FENNY CASTLE, River Sheppey**  
Ranking used data from 01/01/1964 to 31/12/2022



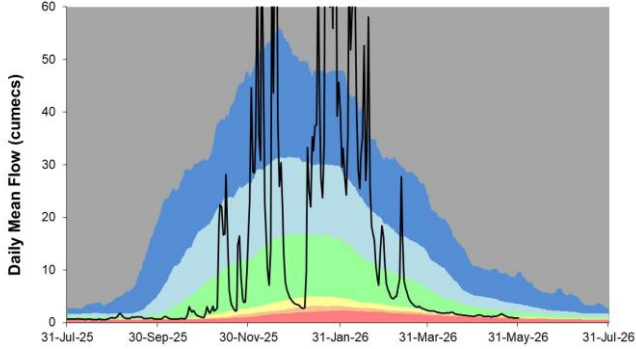
**FRENCHAY, Bristol Frome**  
Ranking used data from 01/09/1961 to 31/12/2022



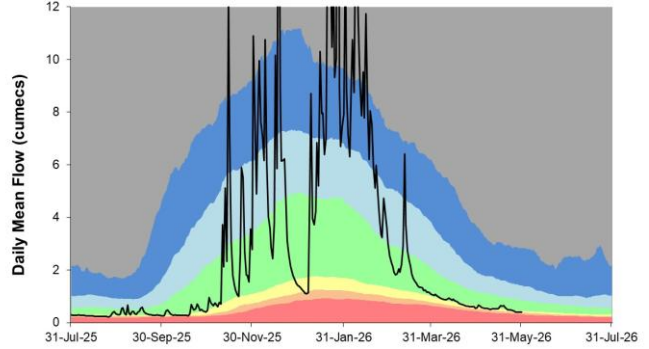
**GREAT SOMERFORD, River Avon**  
Ranking used data from 16/12/1963 to 31/12/2022

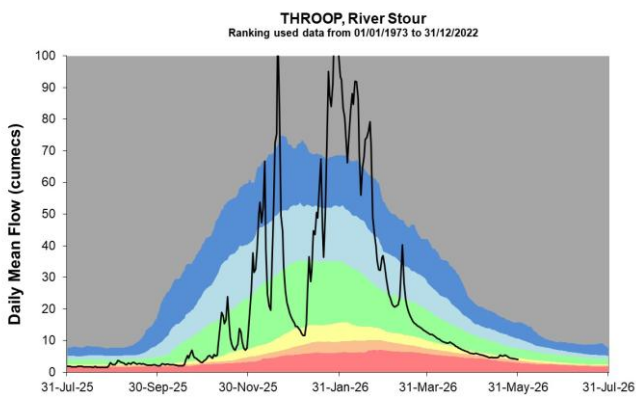
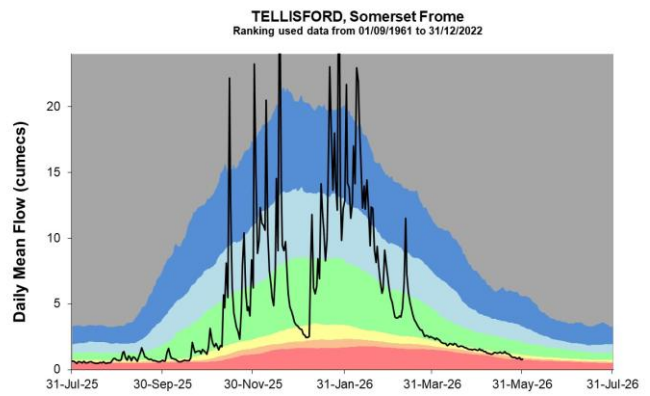
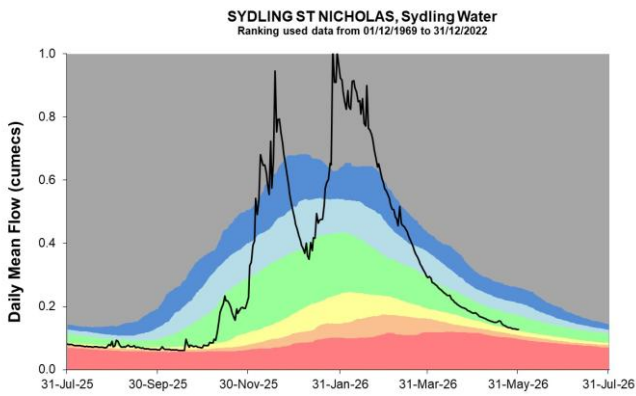
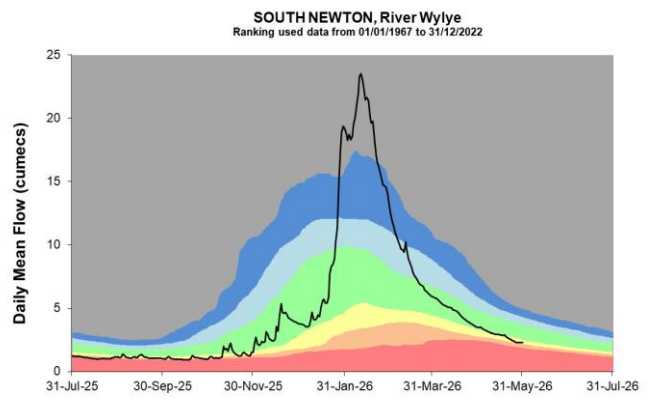
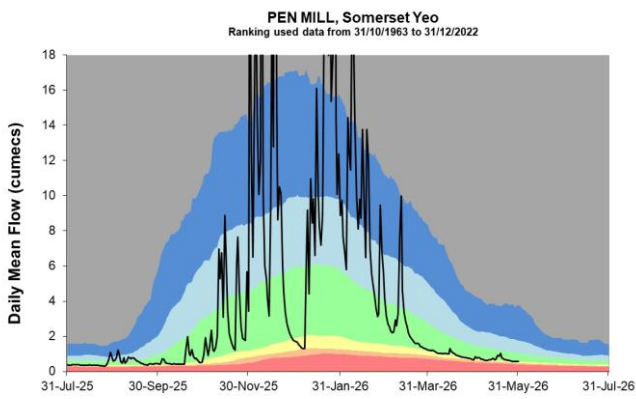


**HAMMOON, River Stour**  
Ranking used data from 01/03/1968 to 31/12/2022



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



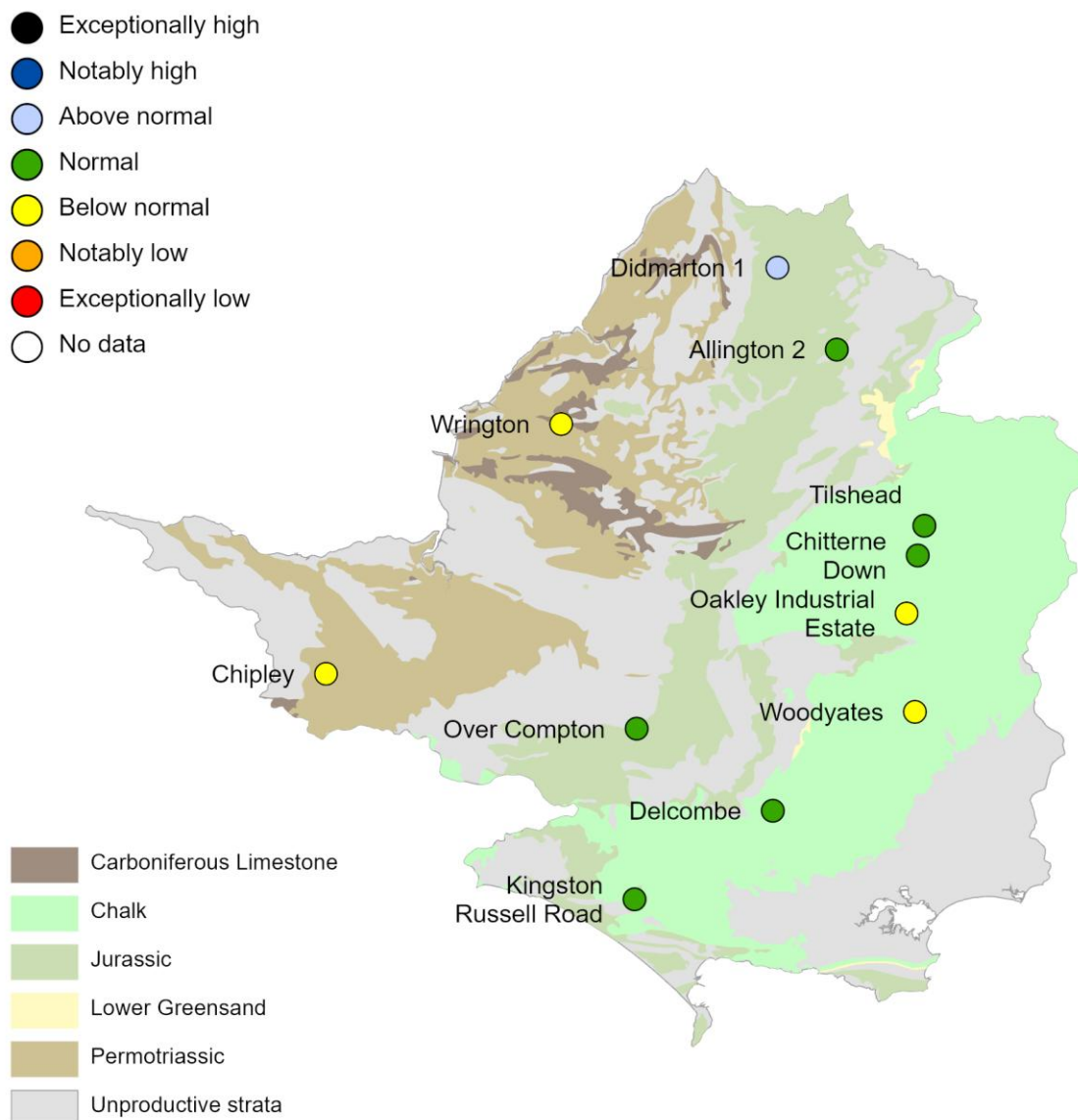


Source: Environment Agency, 2026. Flow data at Knapp Mill on the Hampshire Avon is omitted due to data issues. Flow data at Throop on the Stour should be treated with caution.

## 5 Groundwater levels

### 5.1 Groundwater levels map

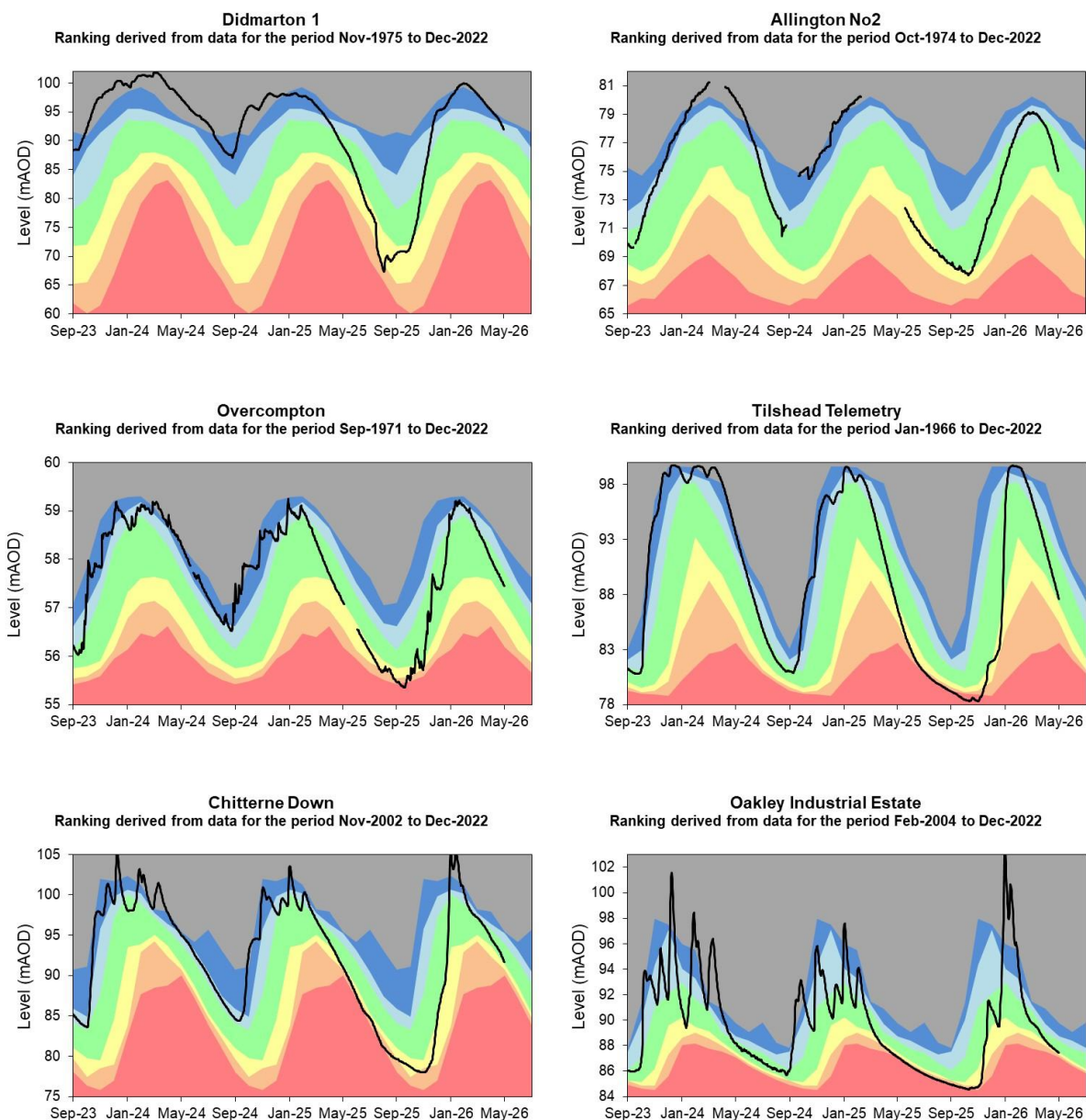
Figure 5.1: Groundwater levels for indicator sites at the end of May 2026, classed relative to an analysis of respective historic May levels. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.

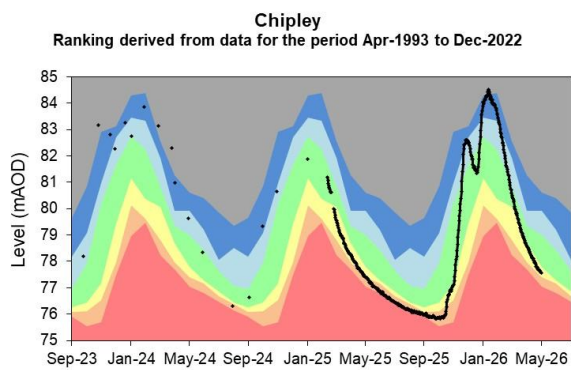
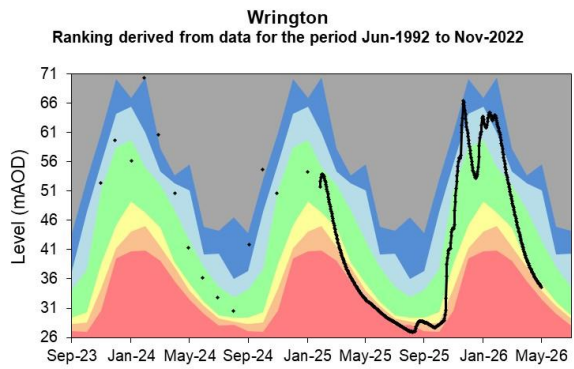
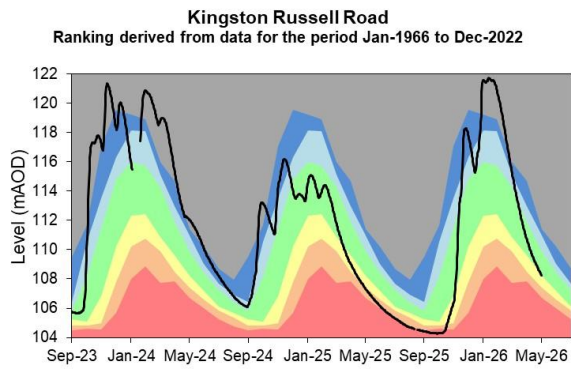
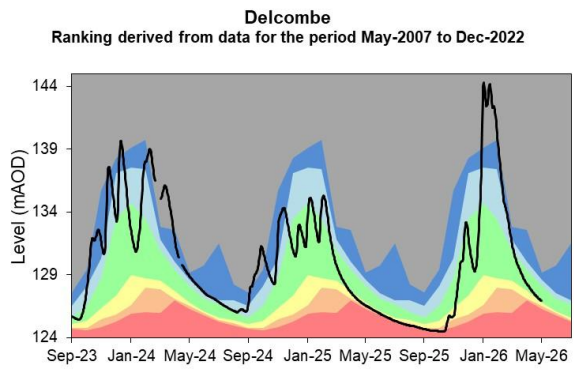
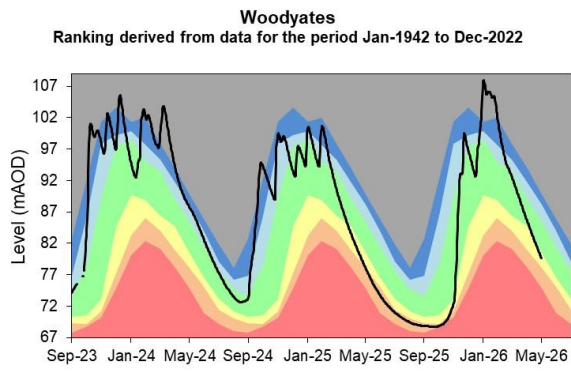


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## 5.2 Groundwater level charts

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.

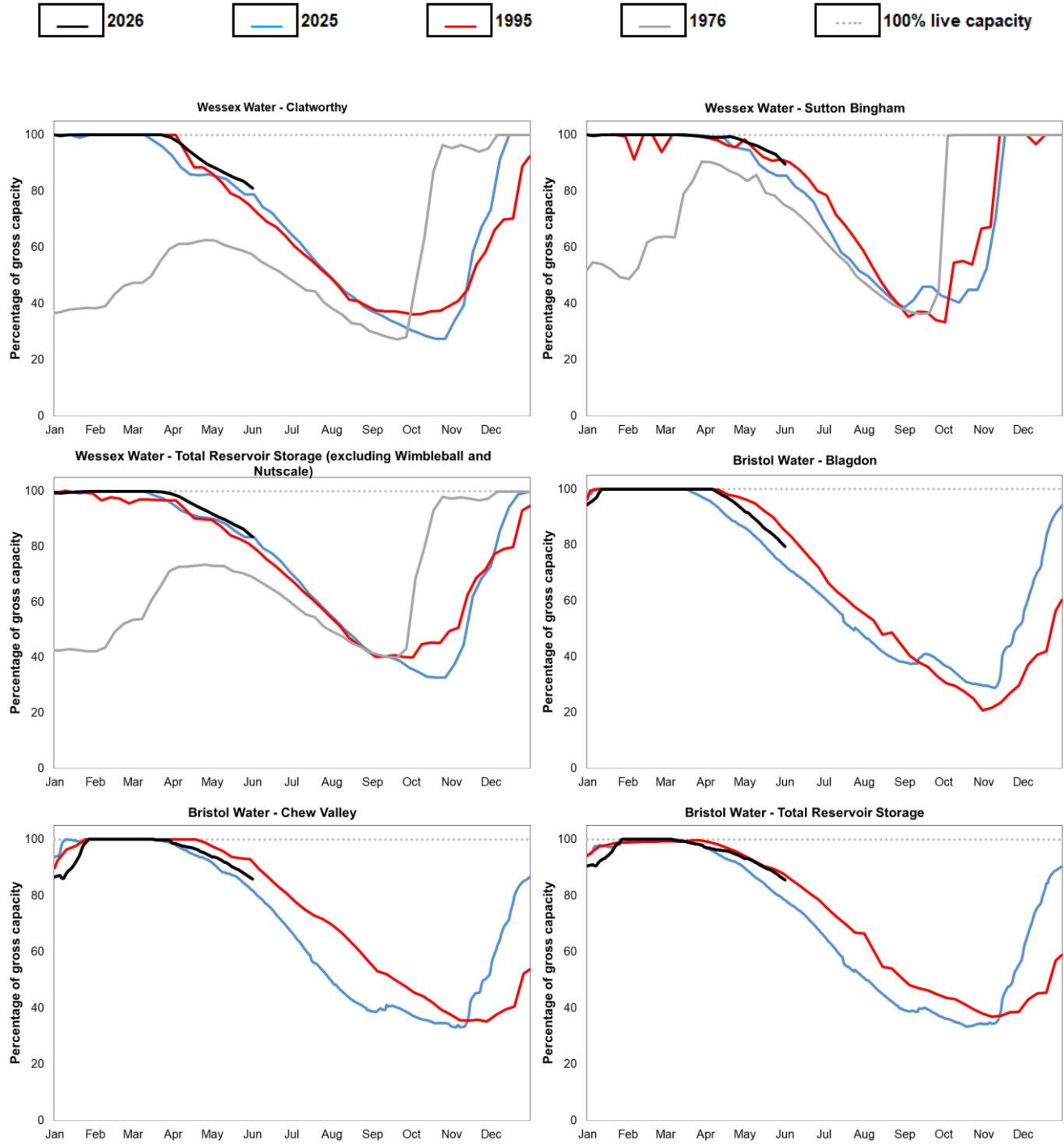




Source: Environment Agency, 2026.

## 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 May

Area	Number of fluvial flood alerts in May	Number of coastal flood alerts in May	Number of groundwater flood alerts in May
North Wessex	0	1	0
South Wessex	0	0	0

### 7.2 Flood warnings

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

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

### 7.3 Severe flood warnings

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

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

## 8 Stream support

### 8.1 Sites providing stream support

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

Catchment	River	Stream support site	Gauging station	End of May status
Bristol Avon	Chalfield Brook	South Wraxall	Great Chalfield (Wessex Water)	On
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	On
Bristol Avon	Horscombe Stream	Tucking Mill	No Gauge	Off
Bristol Avon	Luckington Brook	Luckington	Fossway	On
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	On
Dorset Frome	South Winterbourne	Winterbourne Abbas	Winterbourne Steepleton	Off

Catchment	River	Stream support site	Gauging station	End of May status
Dorset Frome	Watergates Stream	Watergates	No Gauge	On
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	On
Piddle	Piddle	Briantspuddle	Briantspuddle	On
Dorset Stour	Crichel Stream	Long Crichel	No Gauge	Off
Dorset Stour	Gussage Stream	Gussage All Saints	Bowerswain	On
Dorset Stour	Allen	Wyke Down	All Hallows	On
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	Wylde	Brixton Deverill	Brixton Deverill & Heytesbury	Off
Hampshire Avon	Wylde	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 May

Catchment	Number of licences at restrict at the end of May	Number of licences at cease at the end of May
Bristol Avon	2	0
Dorset	3	0
Hampshire Avon	4	1
Somerset	6	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 ( $\text{m}^3\text{s}^{-1}$ ).

### **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**

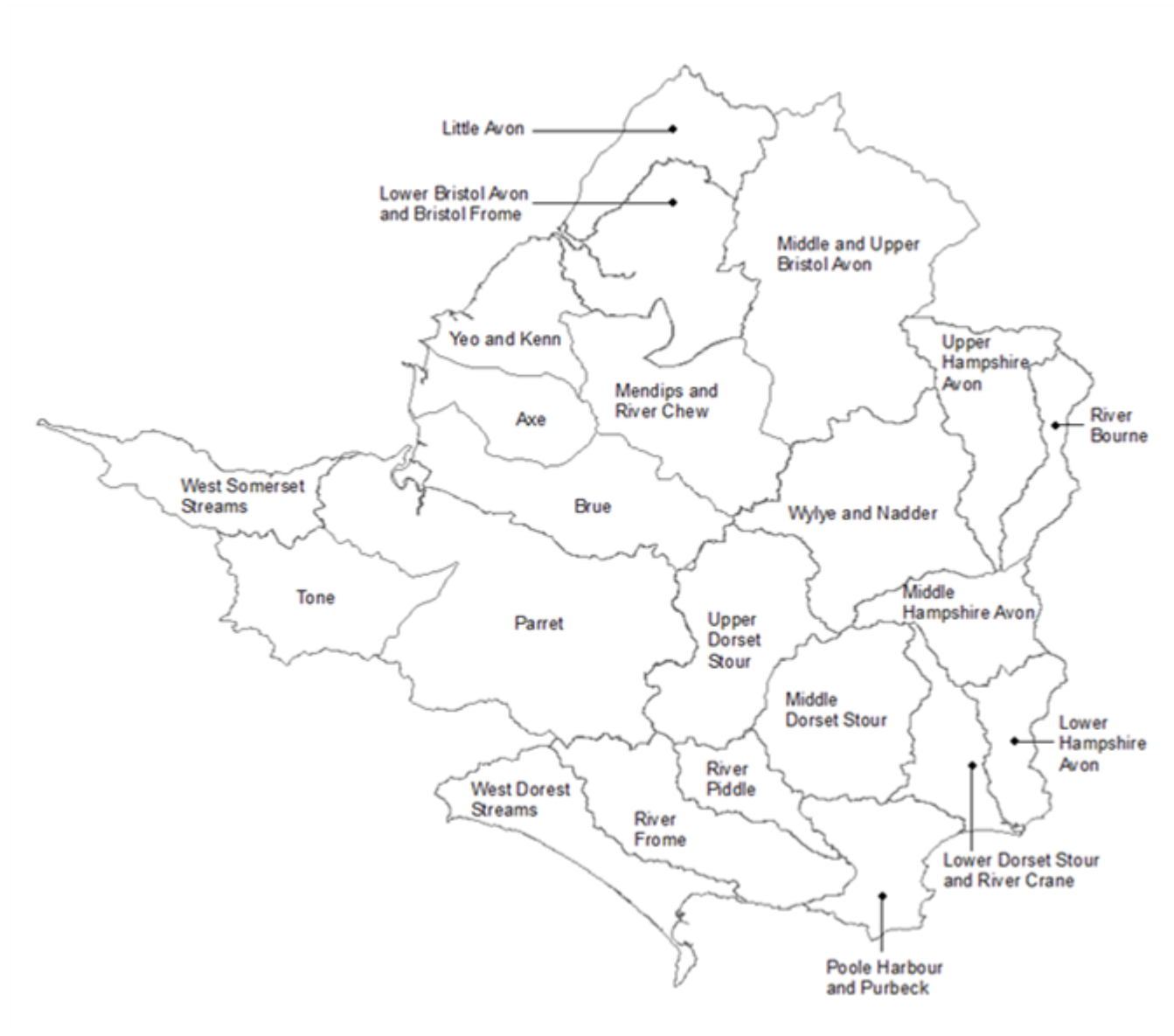
Value likely to fall within this band 8% of the time.

### **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.



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# 11 Appendices

## 11.1 Rainfall table

Hydrological area	May 2026 rainfall % of long term average 1991 to 2020	May 2026 band	Mar 2026 to May cumulative band	Dec 2025 to May cumulative band	Jun 2025 to May cumulative band
Axe	82	Normal	Notably low	Notably high	Above normal
Brue	71	Normal	Notably low	Notably high	Normal
Little Avon	87	Normal	Notably low	Above normal	Above normal
Lower Bristol Avon And Bristol Frome	85	Normal	Notably low	Above normal	Above normal
Lower Dorset Stour And River Crane	55	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally high	Above normal
Lower Hampshire Avon	55	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Notably high	Above normal
Mendips And River Chew	61	Below Normal	Notably low	Above normal	Normal
Middle And Upper Bristol Avon	58	Below Normal	Notably low	Above normal	Normal

Hydrological area	May 2026 rainfall % of long term average 1991 to 2020	May 2026 band	Mar 2026 to May cumulative band	Dec 2025 to May cumulative band	Jun 2025 to May cumulative band
Middle Dorset Stour	56	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally high	Notably high
Middle Hampshire Avon	53	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally high	Above normal
Parrett	72	Normal	Notably low	Exceptionally high	Above normal
Poole Harbour And Purbeck	52	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Notably high	Above normal
River Bourne	45	Below Normal	Notably low	Notably high	Above normal
River Frome	56	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally high	Notably high
River Piddle	58	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally high	Notably high
Tone	71	Normal	Exceptionally low	Notably high	Above normal
Upper Dorset Stour	62	Below Normal	Notably low	Exceptionally high	Above normal
Upper Hampshire Avon	43	Notably Low	Exceptionally low	Notably high	Above normal

Hydrological area	May 2026 rainfall % of long term average 1991 to 2020	May 2026 band	Mar 2026 to May cumulative band	Dec 2025 to May cumulative band	Jun 2025 to May cumulative band
West Dorset Streams	56	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally high	Notably high
West Somerset Streams	75	Normal	Notably low	Above normal	Normal
Wylde And Nadder	50	Below Normal	Notably low	Notably high	Above normal
Yeo And Kenn	85	Normal	Notably low	Above normal	Normal

## 11.2 River flows table

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

Site name	River	Catchment	May 2026 band	Apr 2026 band
Hammoon	Middle Stour	Dorset Stour	Notably low	Below normal
Knapp Mill	Lower Hampshire Avon	Hampshire Avon	Below normal	Below normal
Lovington	Upper Brue	Brue	Notably low	Below normal
Pen Mill	Yeo	Parrett	Below normal	Below normal
South Newton	River Wylde	Hampshire Avon	Below normal	Normal
Sydling St Nicholas	Sydling Water	Dorset Frome	Normal	Normal
Tellisford	Somerset Frome	Bristol Avon	Notably low	Below normal
Throop	Lower Stour	Dorset Stour	Notably low	Below normal

## 11.3 Groundwater table

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