

Monthly water situation report: Wessex Area

1 Summary - July 2026

July 2026 was a continuation of the dry weather from mid-June with virtually no rainfall. An average of 2mm of rain fell across Wessex, 4% of the long term average (LTA). This was the driest July since records began in 1871 and the driest month since February 1932. Despite this, Wessex still received 66% of the LTA over the past 3 months and 110% of the LTA over the past 12 months. Soil moisture deficit (SMD) continued to rise through July in response to the very low rainfall. At the end of the month, SMD was within 1mm of the historic maximum for this time of year. River flows continued to fall in July. Monthly mean flows were predominantly below normal to notably low. Flows in the south of Wessex were higher relative to the LTA than those in the north due to supporting base flow from the Wessex Basin Chalk. Groundwater levels also fell in July. At the end of the month, sites monitoring the Wessex Basin Chalk were recording below normal to notably low levels while most sites on other geologies were recording normal to below normal levels. At the end of July, reservoir storage for Wessex Water and Bristol Water were 58% and 64% capacity respectively.

1.1 Rainfall

An average of 2mm of rain fell across Wessex in July, 4% of the LTA. This was the driest July since records began in 1871. July 2026 was also the fourth driest of any calendar month since records began in 1871 and the driest since February 1932. Rainfall was slightly higher in the north and west of Wessex but no catchment received even 10% of the LTA. The Axe hydrological area received the most rain in Wessex with 7mm (9% of the LTA). In all catchments of Wessex, rainfall in July was exceptionally low.

Despite an exceptionally dry July, the last 3-month period (May to July) was only the 26th driest on record with 66% of the LTA. Over the last 3 months, rainfall was below normal to notably low across most of Wessex with only the Yeo and Kenn, and Axe hydrological areas recording normal rainfall. Over the past 6 months, all hydrological areas recorded normal or below normal rainfall. Over the past 12 months, Wessex has still received 110% of the LTA. Most hydrological areas in the north recorded above normal rainfall while the majority in the south recorded notably high rainfall.

1.2 Soil moisture

SMD continued to rise throughout July in response to the very low rainfall. At the end of July, SMD was slightly higher than this time last year and within 1mm of the historic maximum for

the time of year. Most hydrological areas in the north of Wessex recorded SMD levels between 101 and 130mm at the end of July while most areas to the south recorded levels between 131 and 160mm. In most areas, SMD was 26 to 50mm greater than the LTA at the end of the month. However, in several areas in the south, SMD was between 51 to 75mm greater than the LTA at the end of July.

1.3 River flows

Daily mean river flows mostly fell through July as a result of the minimal rainfall. However, for many sites the drop in flows was relatively small. Most flow monitoring sites in Wessex reported either below normal or notably low monthly mean flows in July. Three monitoring sites recorded exceptionally low monthly mean flows. These were the Tone at Bishops Hull, the Bristol Frome at Frenchay and the Dorset Stour at Hammoon. Monthly mean flows in the south of Wessex tended to be a higher percentage of the LTA as flows were supported by base flow supplied by the Wessex Basin Chalk. Despite this, all sites monitoring flows within the Hampshire Avon catchment which is supported by the aquifer, reported notably low monthly mean flows.

1.4 Groundwater levels

Groundwater levels continued to fall across all of Wessex in July as a result of the minimal rainfall. At the end of July, all monitoring sites on the Wessex Basin Chalk reported below normal or notably low levels. Most sites monitoring other geologies recorded normal or below normal levels at the end of July. The only exception was Chipley (monitoring the Otter Sandstone) which recorded exceptionally low levels. The only sites to record normal levels at the end of July in Wessex were Didmarton (monitoring the Inferior Oolite) and Overcompton (monitoring the Bridport Sand).

1.5 Reservoir storage

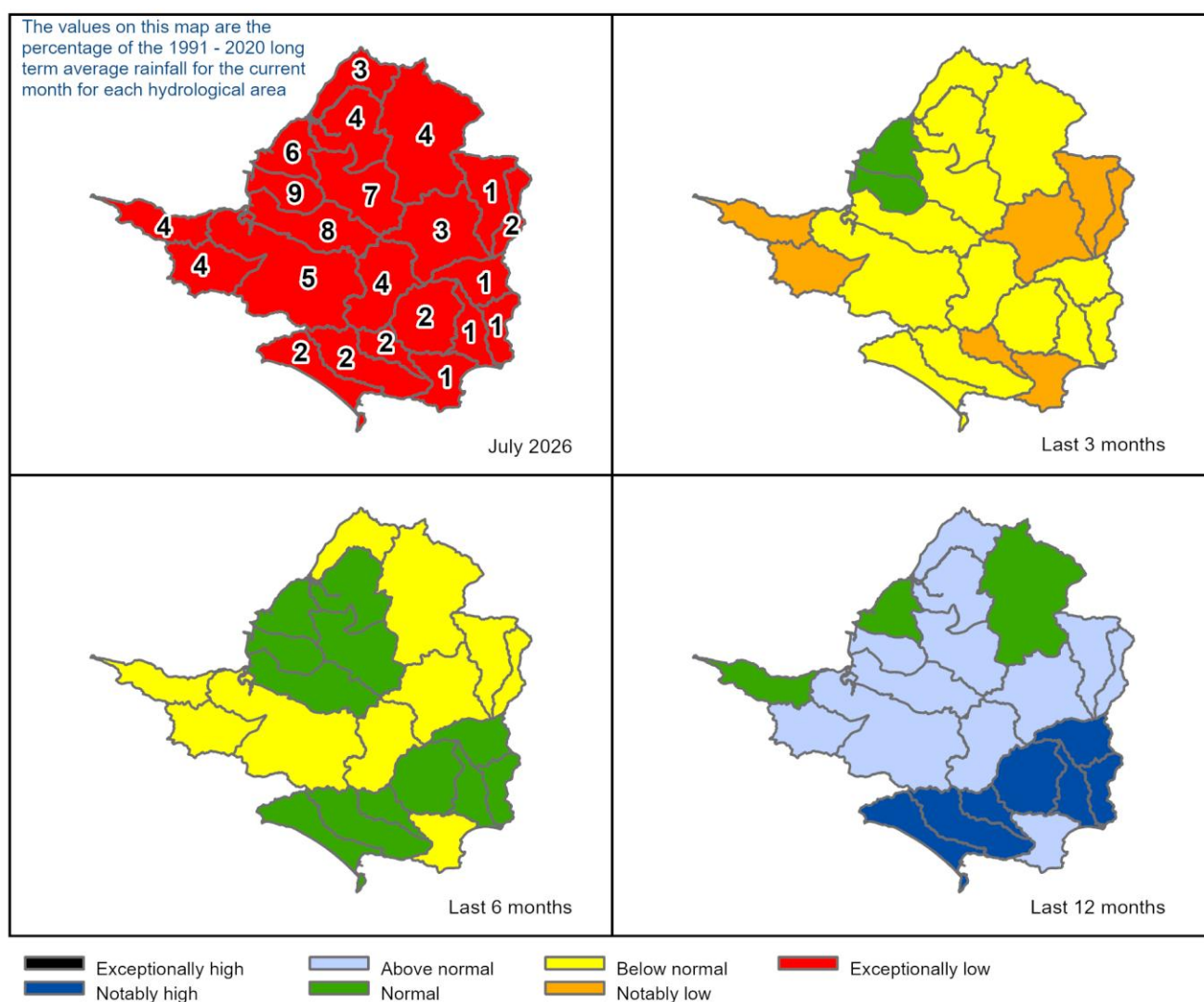
Reservoir storage has continued to fall through July for both Bristol Water and Wessex Water. Wessex Water ended the month at approximately 58% capacity which is similar to storage this time last year and in 1995. Bristol Water ended July at approximately 64% capacity which higher than in 2025 and just below storage in 1995.

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2 Rainfall

2.1 Rainfall map

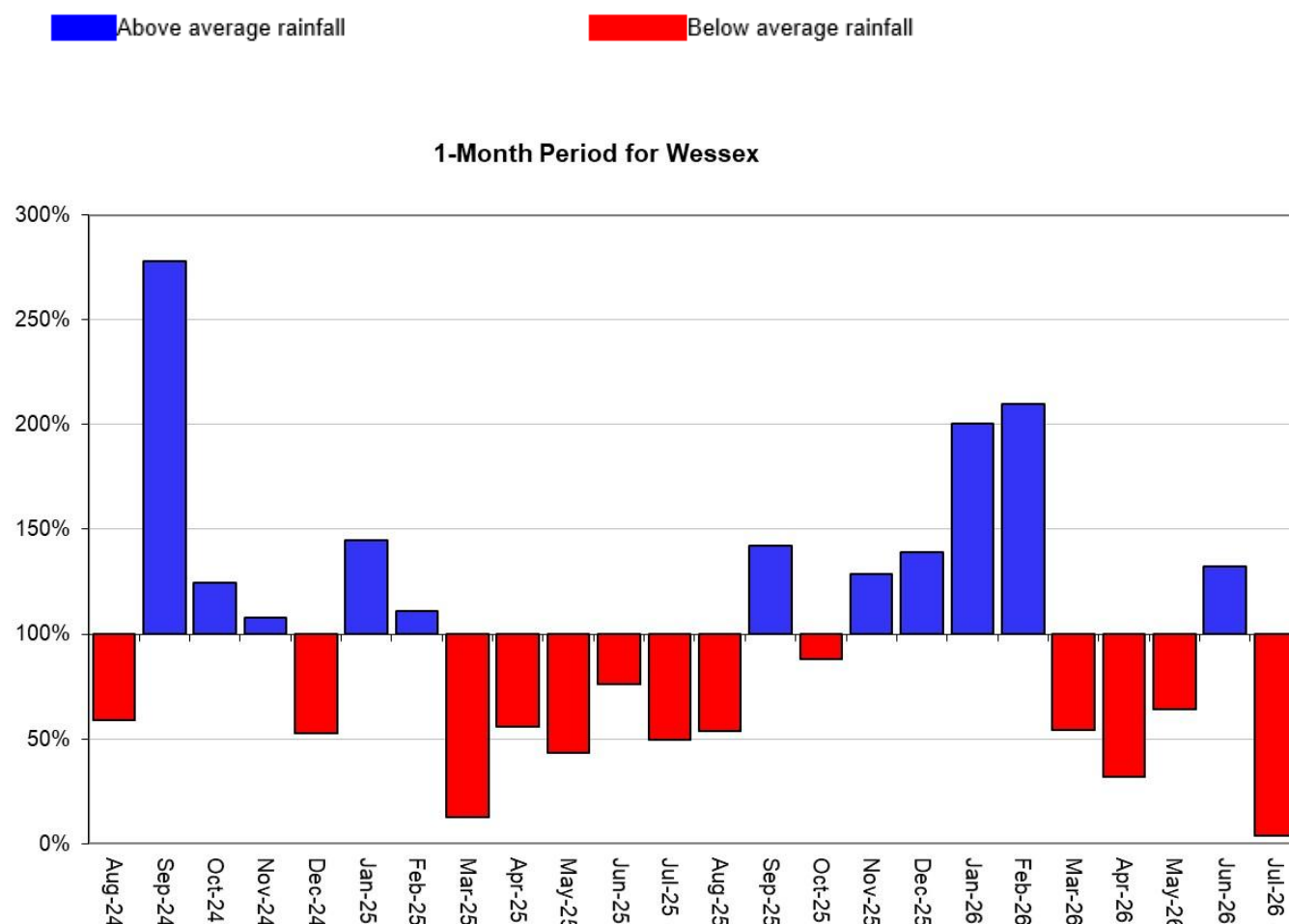
Figure 2.1: Total rainfall for hydrological areas for the current month (up to 31 July 2026), the last 3 months, the last 6 months, and the last 12 months, classed relative to an analysis of respective historic totals between 1991 and 2020. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.



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.

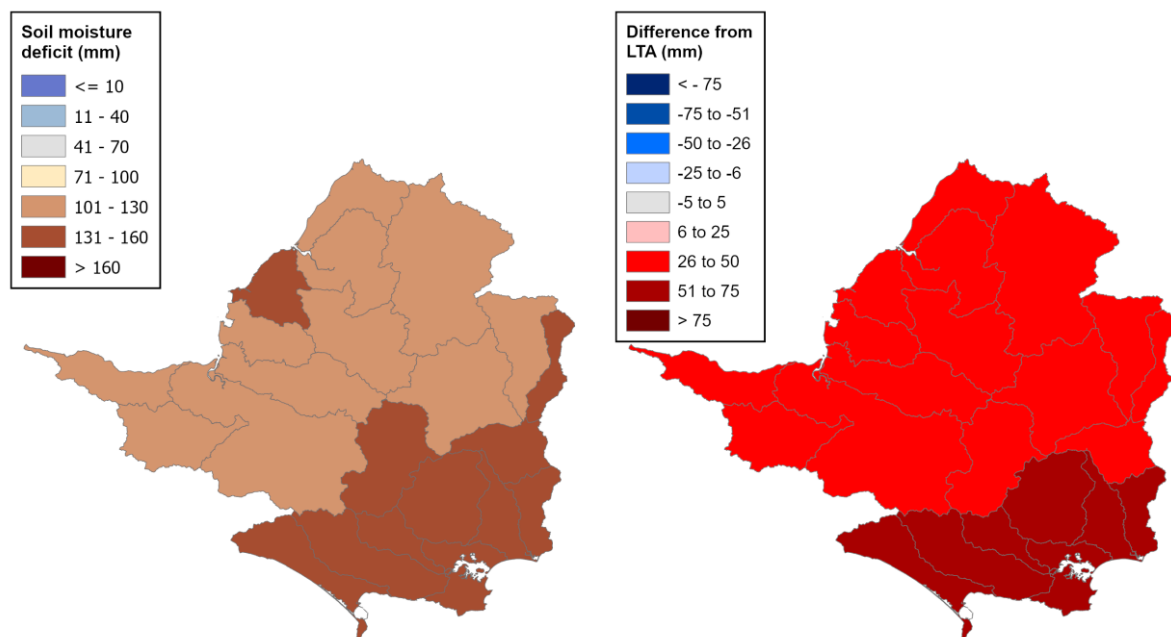


Rainfall data for January 2025 onwards, extracted from Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges. (Source: Environment Agency. Crown Copyright, 100024198, 2026). Rainfall data prior to January 2025, extracted from Met Office HadUK 1km gridded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

3 Soil moisture deficit

3.1 Soil moisture deficit map

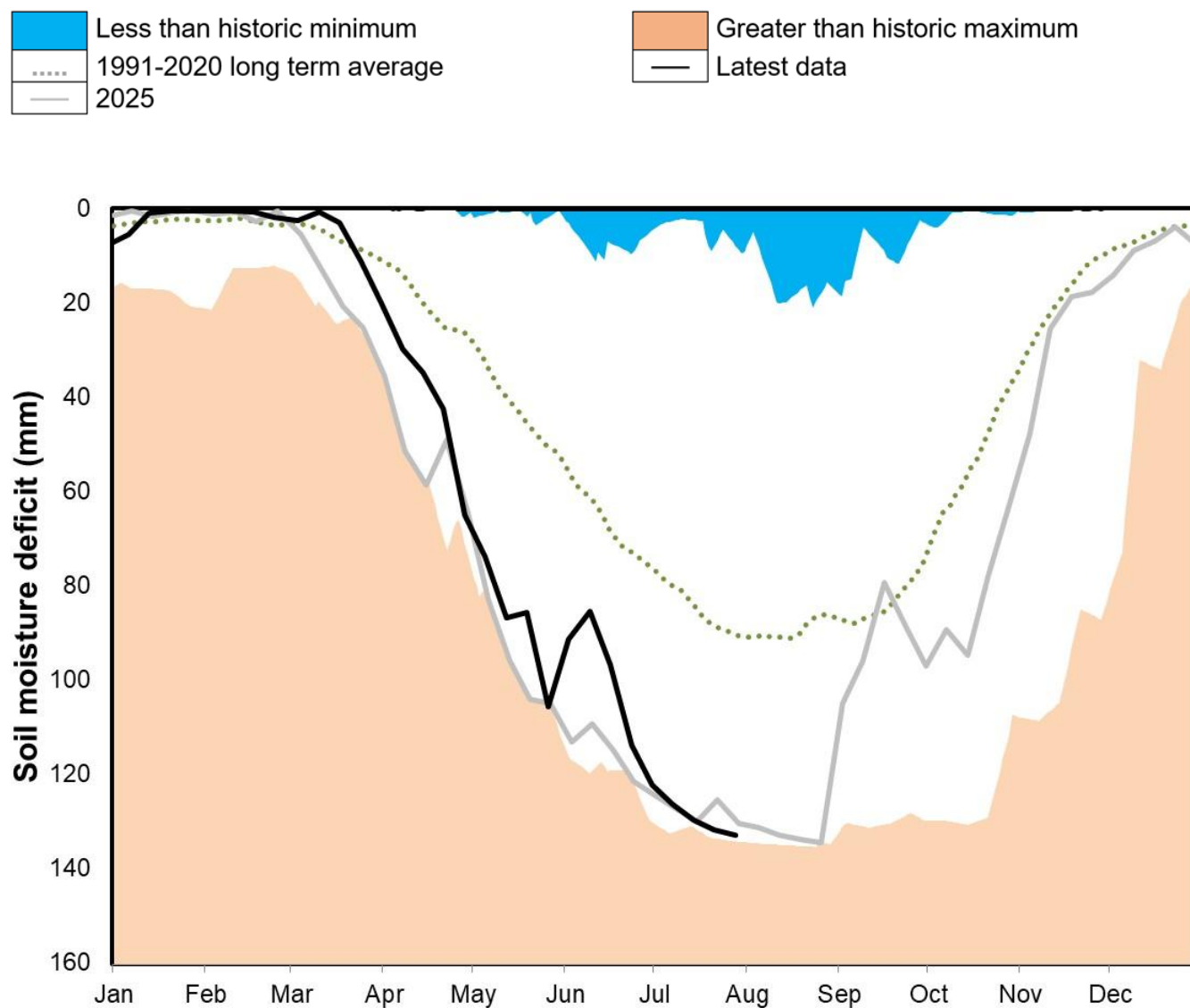
Figure 3.1: Soil moisture deficits for weeks ending 31 July 2026. Shows the difference (mm) of the actual soil moisture deficit from the 1991 to 2020 long term average soil moisture deficits. MORECS data for real land use.



(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.

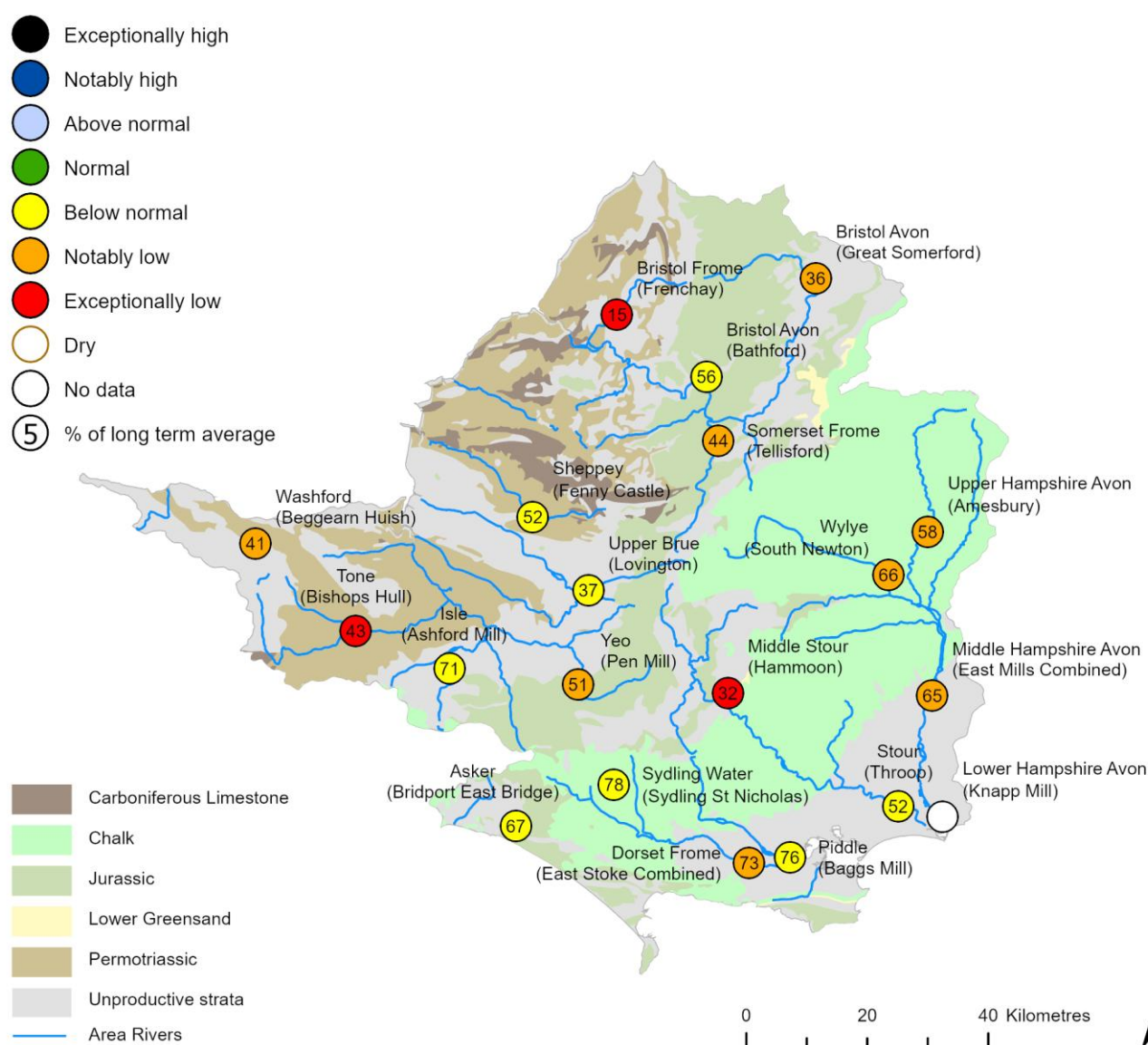


(Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026). All rights reserved. Environment Agency, 100024198, 2026

4 River flows

4.1 River flows map

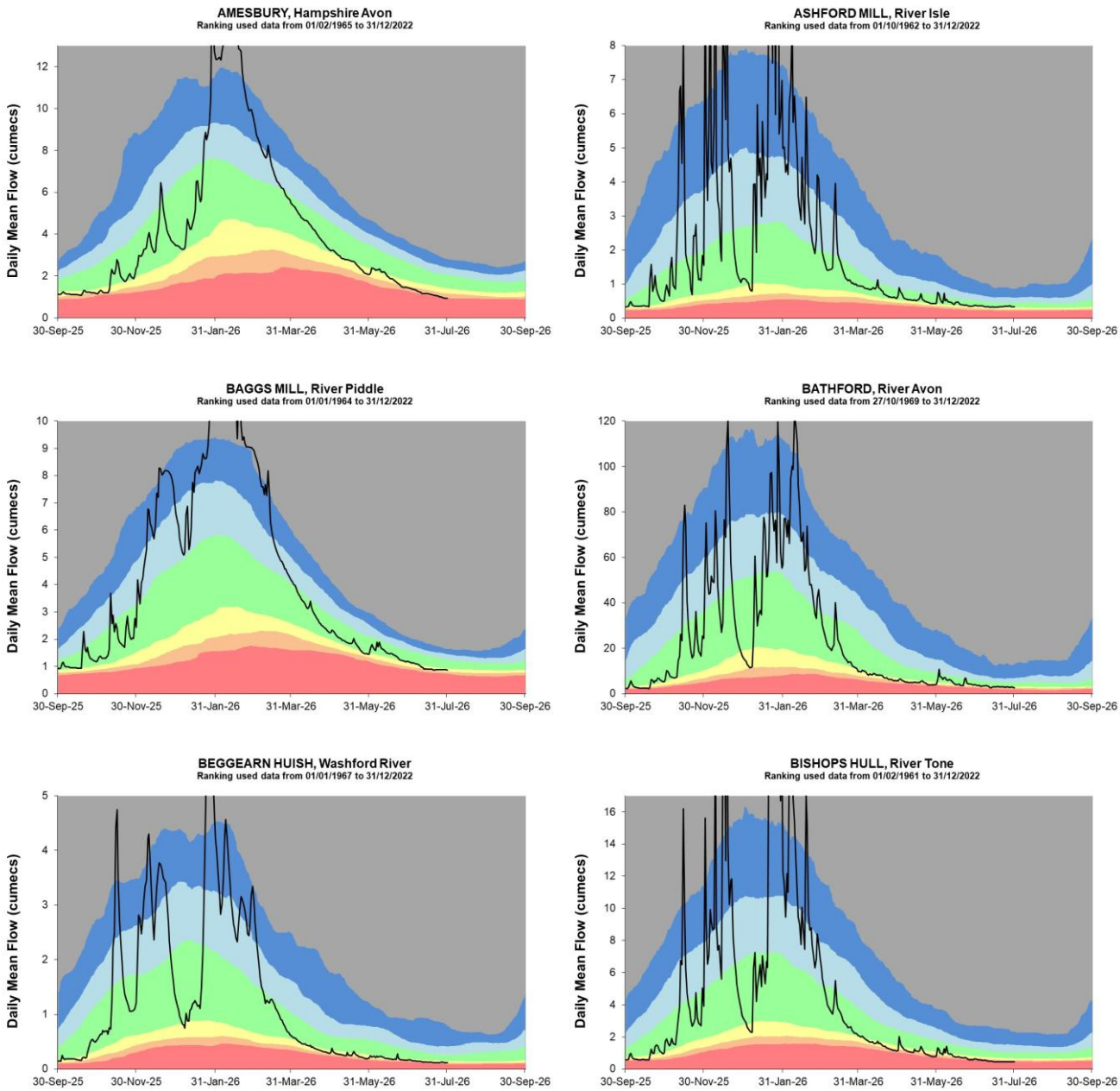
Figure 4.1: Monthly mean river flow for indicator sites for July 2026, expressed as a percentage of the respective long term average and classed relative to an analysis of historic July monthly means Table available in the appendices with detailed information. The Wylfe at South Newton and Dorset Stour at Throop should be treated with caution. The Hampshire Avon at Knapp Mill is omitted due to ongoing data issues.



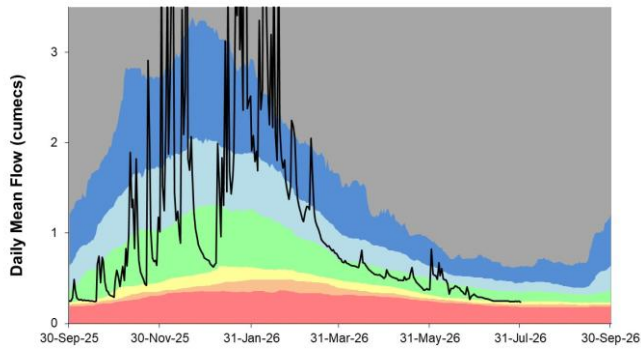
(Source: Environment Agency). Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, AC0000807064, 2026.

4.2 River flow charts

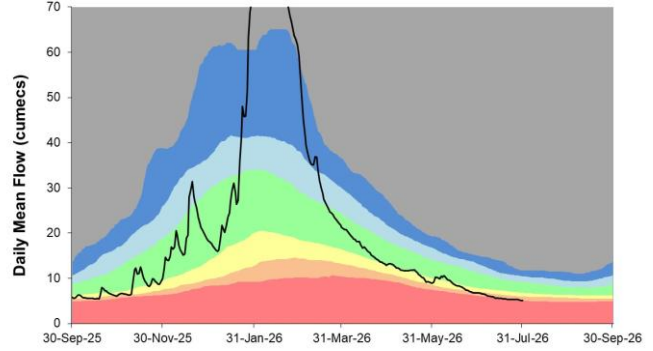
Figure 4.2: Daily mean river flow for index sites over the past year, compared to an analysis of historic daily mean flows. The Wylfe at South Newton and Dorset Stour at Throop should be treated with caution. The Hampshire Avon at Knapp Mill is omitted due to ongoing data issues.



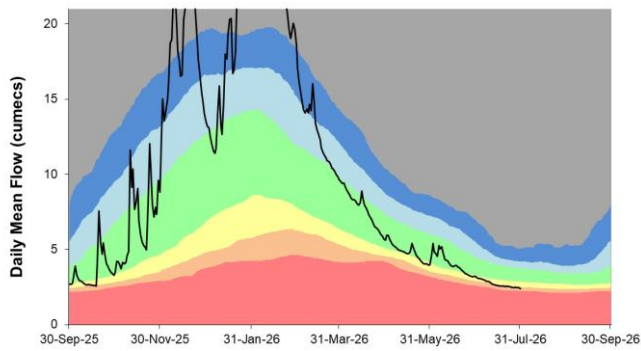
BRIDPORTEAST BRIDGE, River Asker
Ranking used data from 01/03/1996 to 31/12/2022



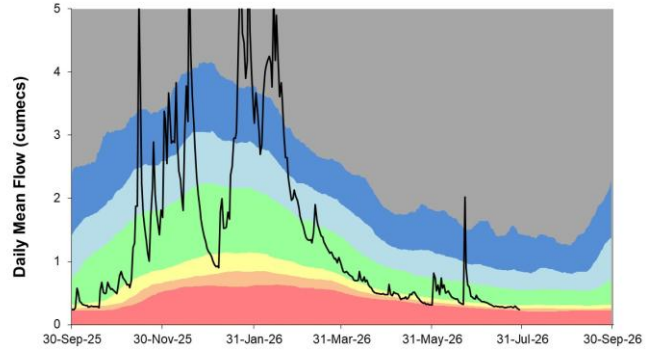
EAST MILLS COMBINED, Hampshire Avon
Ranking used data from 01/11/1965 to 31/12/2022



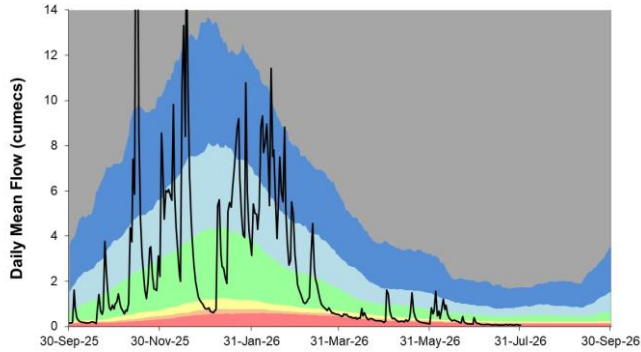
EAST STOKE COMBINED, Dorset Frome
Ranking used data from 01/10/1965 to 31/12/2022



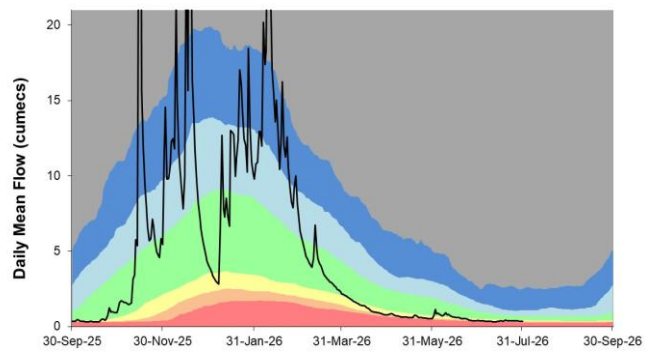
FENNY CASTLE, River Sheppey
Ranking used data from 01/01/1964 to 31/12/2022



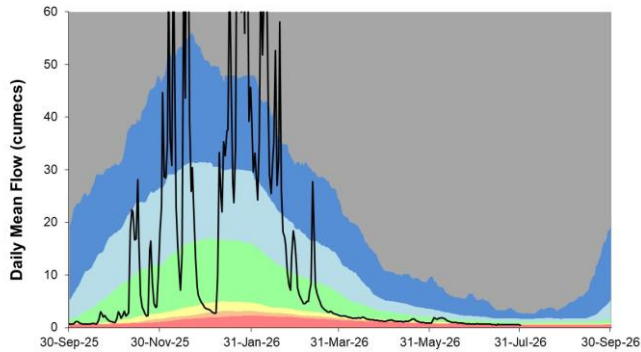
FRENCHAY, Bristol Frome
Ranking used data from 01/09/1961 to 31/12/2022



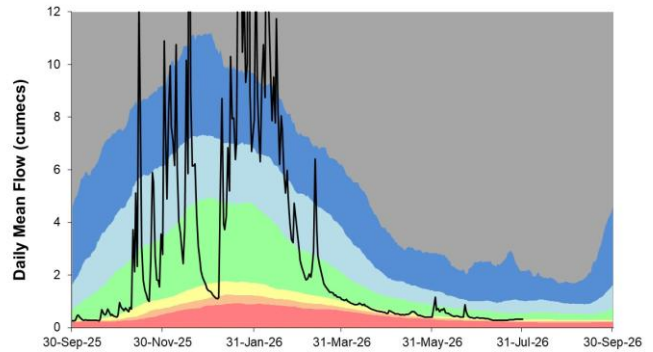
GREAT SOMERFORD, River Avon
Ranking used data from 16/12/1963 to 31/12/2022

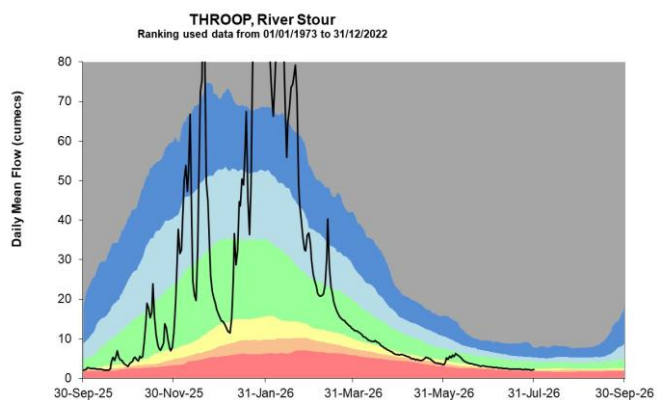
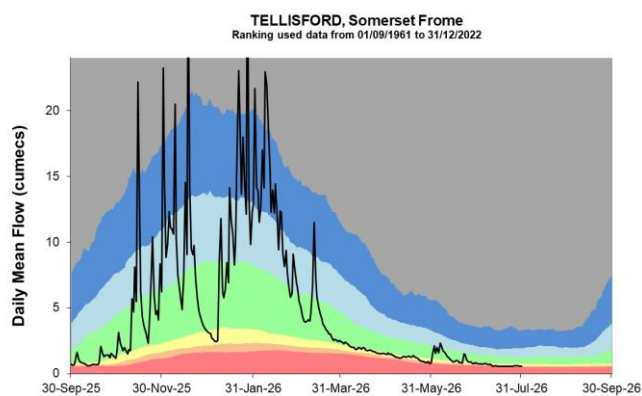
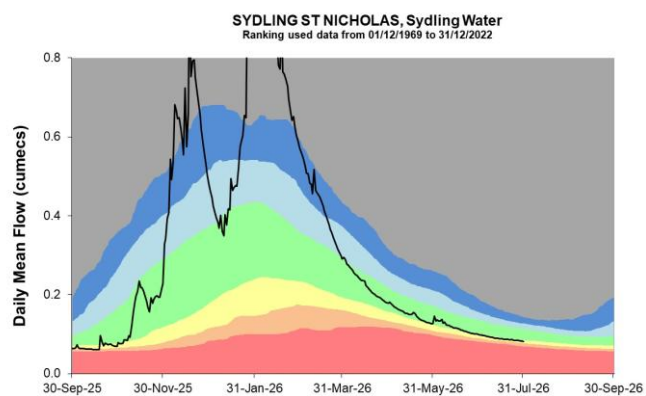
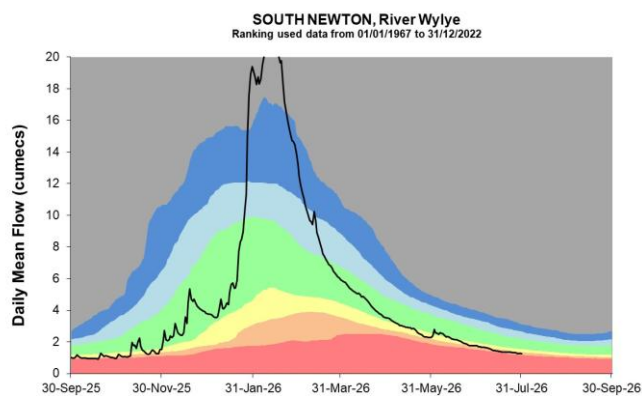
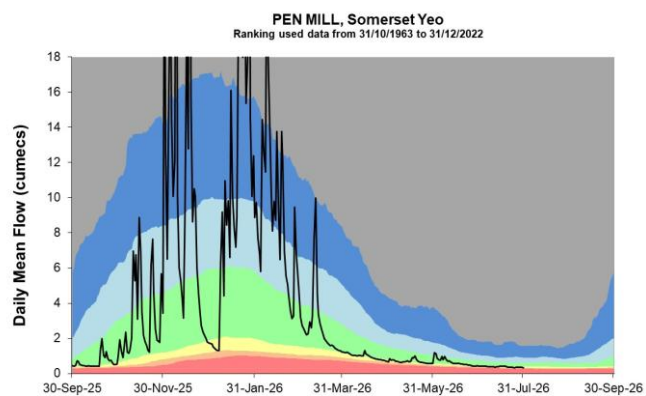


HAMMOON, River Stour
Ranking used data from 01/03/1968 to 31/12/2022



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



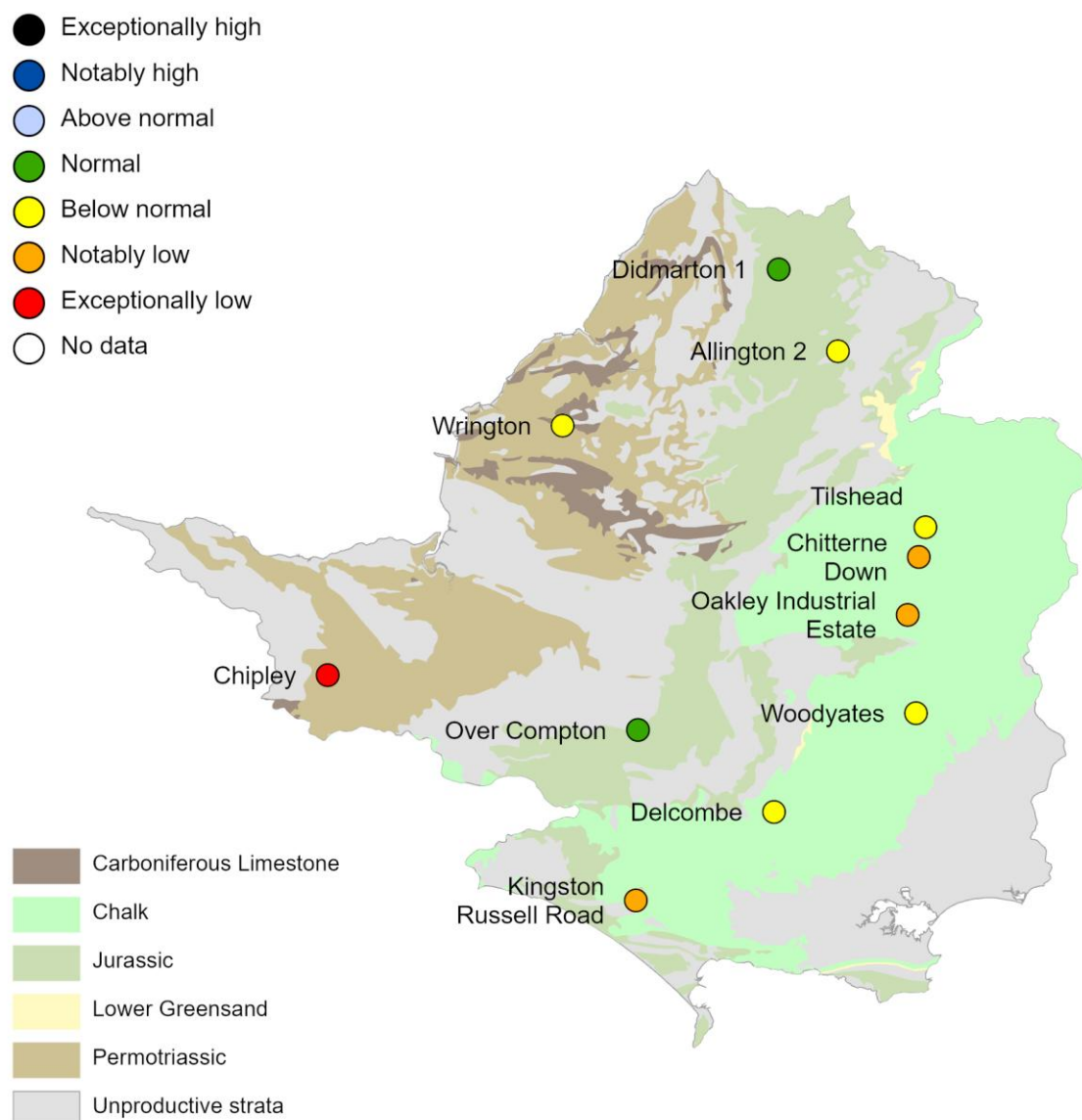


Source: Environment Agency, 2026.

5 Groundwater levels

5.1 Groundwater levels map

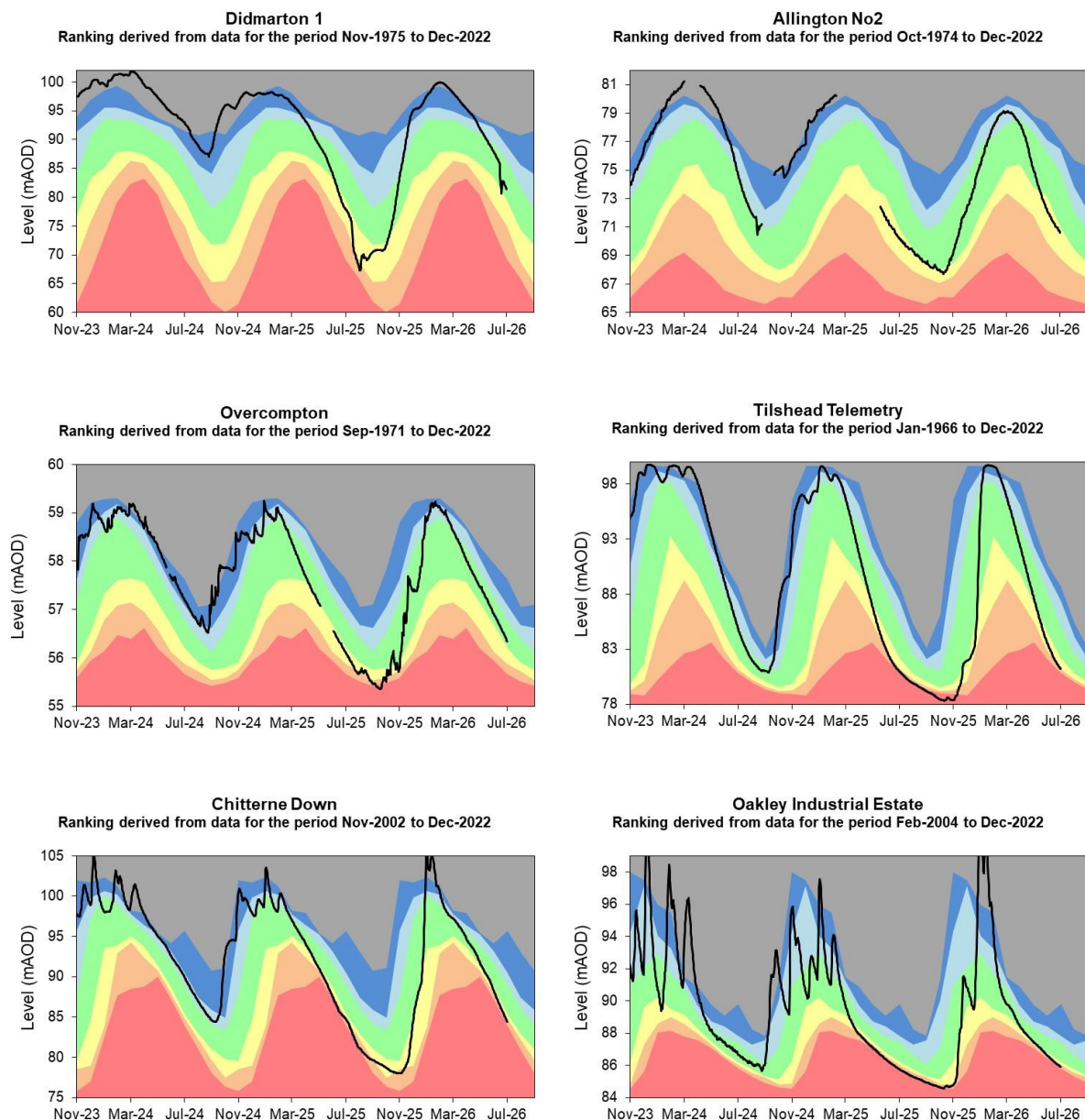
Figure 5.1: Groundwater levels for indicator sites at the end of July 2026, classed relative to an analysis of respective historic end of July levels. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.

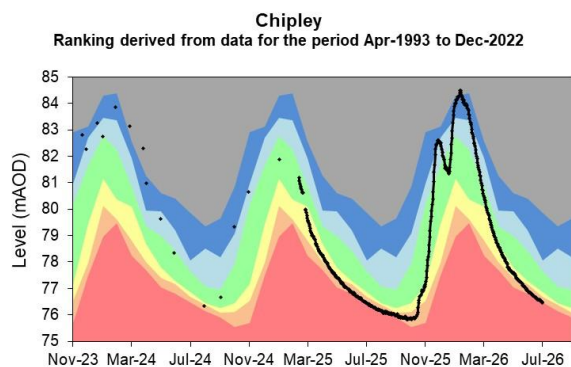
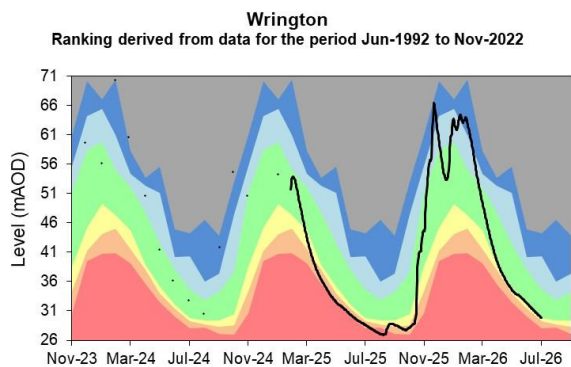
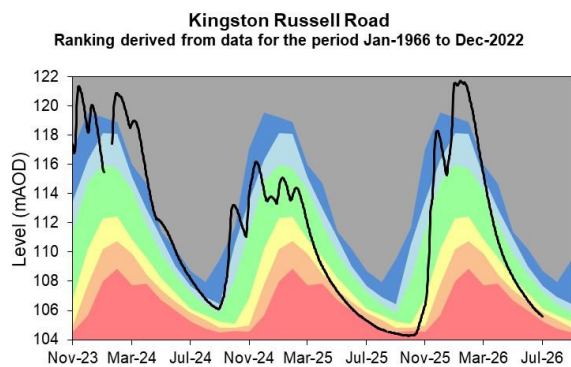
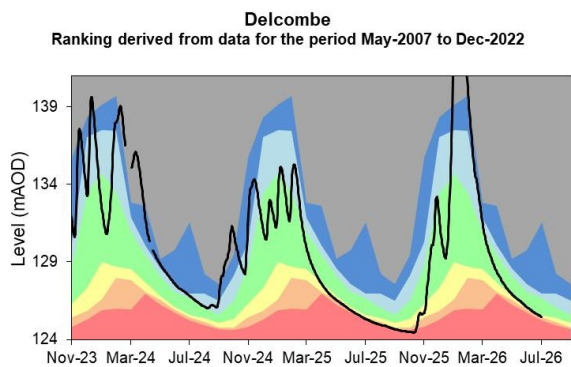
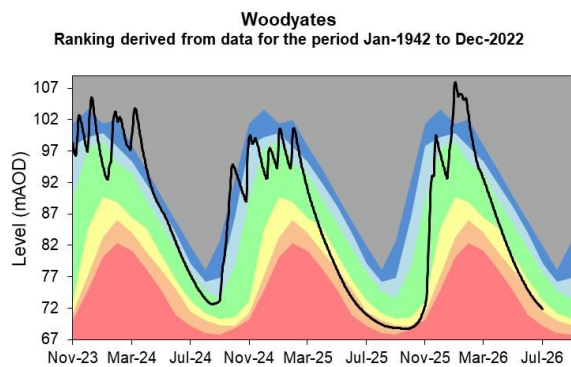


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5.2 Groundwater level charts

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.

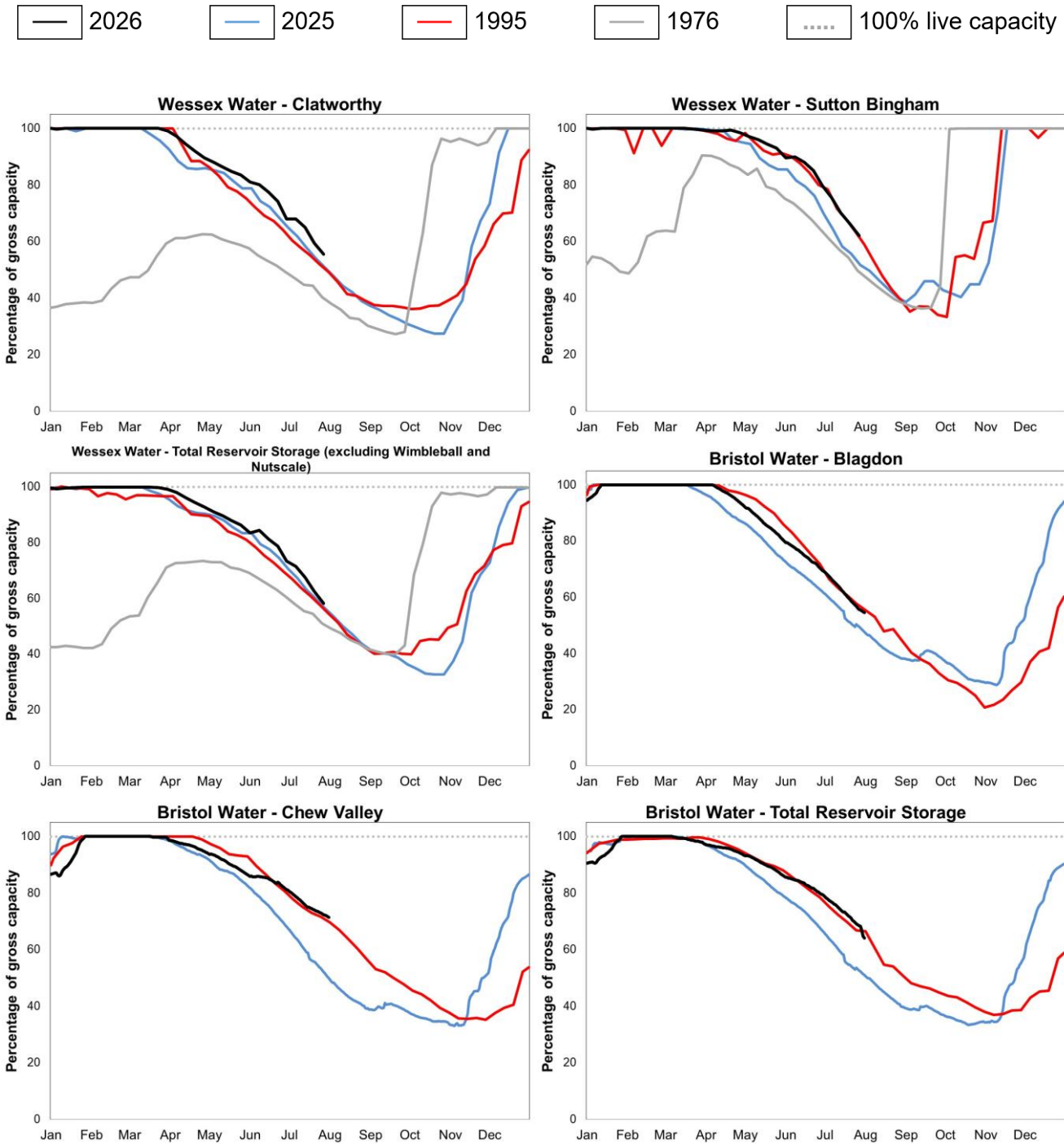




Source: Environment Agency, 2026.

6 Reservoir storage

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

Table 7.1: Fluvial, coastal and groundwater flood alerts issued during July

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

Table 7.2: Fluvial, coastal and groundwater flood warnings issued during July

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

Table 7.3: Fluvial, coastal and groundwater severe flood warnings issued during July

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

8 Stream support

Table 8.1: End of July status for stream support sites.

Catchment	River	Stream support site	Gauging station	End of July status
Bristol Avon	Chalfield Brook	South Wraxall	Great Chalfield (Wessex Water)	On
Bristol Avon	Chalfield Brook	Little Chalfield	Great Chalfield (Wessex Water)	On
Bristol Avon	Charlton Stream	Charlton	Crabb Mill	On
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
Dorset Frome	Watergates Stream	Watergates	No Gauge	On

Catchment	River	Stream support site	Gauging station	End of July status
Piddle	Devil's Brook	Dewlish	Dewlish Woodsdown Cross	On
Piddle	Piddle	Alton Mill	South House & Little Puddle	On
Piddle	Piddle	Morningwell	South House & Little Puddle	On
Piddle	Piddle	Briantspuddle	Briantspuddle	On
Dorset Stour	Crichel Stream	Long Crichel	No Gauge	On
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	On
Hampshire Avon	Wylfe	Brixton Deverill	Brixton Deverill & Heytesbury	On
Hampshire Avon	Wylfe	Kingston Deverill	Brixton Deverill & Heytesbury	On

9 Abstraction licences subject to restrict or cease

Table 9.1: Number of licences at restrict or cease at the end of July.

Catchment	Number of licences at restrict at the end of July	Number of licences at cease at the end of July
Bristol Avon	1	2
Dorset	3	5
Hampshire Avon	5	8
Somerset	9	13

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 1 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 10.3: Rainfall catchments in Wessex.



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11 Appendices

11.1 Rainfall table

Hydrological area	Jul 2026 rainfall % of long term average 1991 to 2020	Jul 2026 band	May 2026 to July cumulative band	Feb 2026 to July cumulative band	Aug 2025 to July cumulative band
Axe	9	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Normal	Above normal
Brue	8	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Normal	Above normal
Little Avon	3	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Below normal	Above normal
Lower Bristol Avon And Bristol Frome	4	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Normal	Above normal
Lower Dorset Stour And River Crane	1	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Normal	Notably high
Lower Hampshire Avon	1	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Normal	Notably high
Mendips And River Chew	7	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Normal	Above normal
Middle And Upper Bristol Avon	4	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Below normal	Normal

Hydrological area	Jul 2026 rainfall % of long term average 1991 to 2020	Jul 2026 band	May 2026 to July cumulative band	Feb 2026 to July cumulative band	Aug 2025 to July cumulative band
Middle Dorset Stour	2	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Normal	Notably high
Middle Hampshire Avon	1	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Normal	Notably high
Parrett	5	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Below normal	Above normal
Poole Harbour And Purbeck	1	Exceptionally Low	Notably low	Below normal	Above normal
River Bourne	2	Exceptionally Low	Notably low	Below normal	Above normal
River Frome	2	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Normal	Notably high
River Piddle	2	Exceptionally Low	Notably low	Normal	Notably high
Tone	4	Exceptionally Low	Notably low	Below normal	Above normal
Upper Dorset Stour	4	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Below normal	Above normal
Upper Hampshire Avon	1	Exceptionally Low	Notably low	Below normal	Above normal

Hydrological area	Jul 2026 rainfall % of long term average 1991 to 2020	Jul 2026 band	May 2026 to July cumulative band	Feb 2026 to July cumulative band	Aug 2025 to July cumulative band
West Dorset Streams	2	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Normal	Notably high
West Somerset Streams	4	Exceptionally Low	Notably low	Below normal	Normal
Wylfe And Nadder	3	Exceptionally Low	Notably low	Below normal	Above normal
Yeo And Kenn	6	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Normal	Normal

11.2 River flows table

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

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

11.3 Groundwater table

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