

Monthly water situation report: Wessex Area

1 Summary - August 2026

August 2026 began dry with some 70% of total rain recorded between 26 and 30 August. An average of 46mm of rain fell across Wessex in August, 64% the long term average (LTA). Despite the rain, the latest 2 month period is the fourth driest July to August on record for Wessex. Over the last 6 months, Wessex reported 58% LTA rainfall which is the sixth driest March to August on record. This follows on from the third wettest 6 month period on record from September (2025) to February (2026) for Wessex. Soil moisture deficit (SMD) rose through the early part of August in response to the dry weather and reached a historic maximum in late August. SMD fell after 26 August but still ended the month well above the LTA. Daily mean river flows remained low for most of August with some response to rainfall in mid to late August. Monthly mean flows were predominately below normal to notably low. Six sites recorded exceptionally low monthly mean flow, 3 of which were in Wessex Chalk Aquifer catchments. Groundwater levels fell through August with little immediate impact from rain. At the end of the month, Chipley in the west, Wrington in the north and Tilshead in the south all reported exceptionally low groundwater levels. All sites on the Wessex Chalk Aquifer reported below normal to exceptionally low groundwater levels. At the end of August, reservoir storage for Wessex Water and Bristol Water were 41% and 54% capacity respectively.

1.1 Rainfall

An average of 46mm of rain fell across Wessex in August, 64% the LTA. Despite some light rain, the month started off relatively dry. Approximately 94% of Wessex's total rain was recorded after 18 August with 70% of August's total rain recorded between 26 to 30 August. Rainfall was higher in the north than the south of Wessex with majority of hydrological areas receiving below normal rainfall with some receiving normal rainfall. The Axe hydrological area received the most rain in Wessex through August with 76mm (89% LTA)

July and August combined were the fourth driest on record in the Wessex area for this 2 month period. Over the last 3 months, rainfall was recorded as below normal to notably low for almost all hydrological areas across Wessex (66% the LTA). Over the last 6 months, Wessex reported 58% LTA rainfall which is the sixth driest March to August on record. In this period the majority of hydrological areas have received exceptionally low rainfall. This follows on from the third wettest 6 month period on record from September (2025) to February (2026) for Wessex. This is reflected by the previous 12 month rainfall reporting as 111% of the LTA.

1.2 Soil moisture

SMD increased through the early part of August in response to the dry weather. Despite rainfall in the middle of the month SMD reached a historic maximum in late August. SMD

decreased in response to rainfall in late August but by the end of the month SMD was still greater than the LTA. Most hydrological areas recorded a SMD of 101 to 130mm with some southern hydrological areas recording a SMD of 131 to 160mm at the end of August. The majority of areas reported SMD 26 to 50mm greater than the LTA at the end of the month. Some north Wessex areas reported SMD 6 to 25mm greater than the LTA.

1.3 River flows

Daily mean river flows remained low across Wessex for most of August peaking towards the end of the month following rain. By the end of August, daily mean river flows tended to be lower at sites supported by the Wessex Basin Chalk aquifer rather than in the north.

Most monitoring sites in Wessex reported below normal to notably low monthly mean river flows in August with 6 sites reporting exceptionally low and 1 reporting normal. Three sites on the Hampshire Avon were exceptionally low and all other sites supported by the Chalk aquifer were notably low and below normal. Despite this, monthly mean flows in the south of Wessex tended to be a higher percentage of the LTA than the north. The other three exceptionally low sites were away from the Chalk aquifer including the River Tone and Bristol Frome.

1.4 Groundwater levels

Groundwater levels continued to fall across Wessex in July despite the rainfall in the second half of the month. All monitoring sites recorded below normal to exceptionally low groundwater levels by the end of August except Didmarton which reported as normal. Most monitoring sites on the Wessex Basin Chalk reported notably low groundwater levels with Tilshead falling to exceptionally low. Woodyates continues to fall but remains below normal.

In north Wessex, Wrington (monitoring Carboniferous Limestone) and Chipley (monitoring Otter Sandstone) reported exceptionally low groundwater levels. Over Compton (monitoring Bridport Sand) was reported as below normal by the end of August.

1.5 Reservoir storage

Reservoir storage has continued to fall through August for both Bristol Water and Wessex Water. Wessex Water ended the month at approximately 41% capacity which is similar to storage this time last year and in 1995. Bristol Water ended July at approximately 54% capacity which is higher than in 2025 and in 1995.

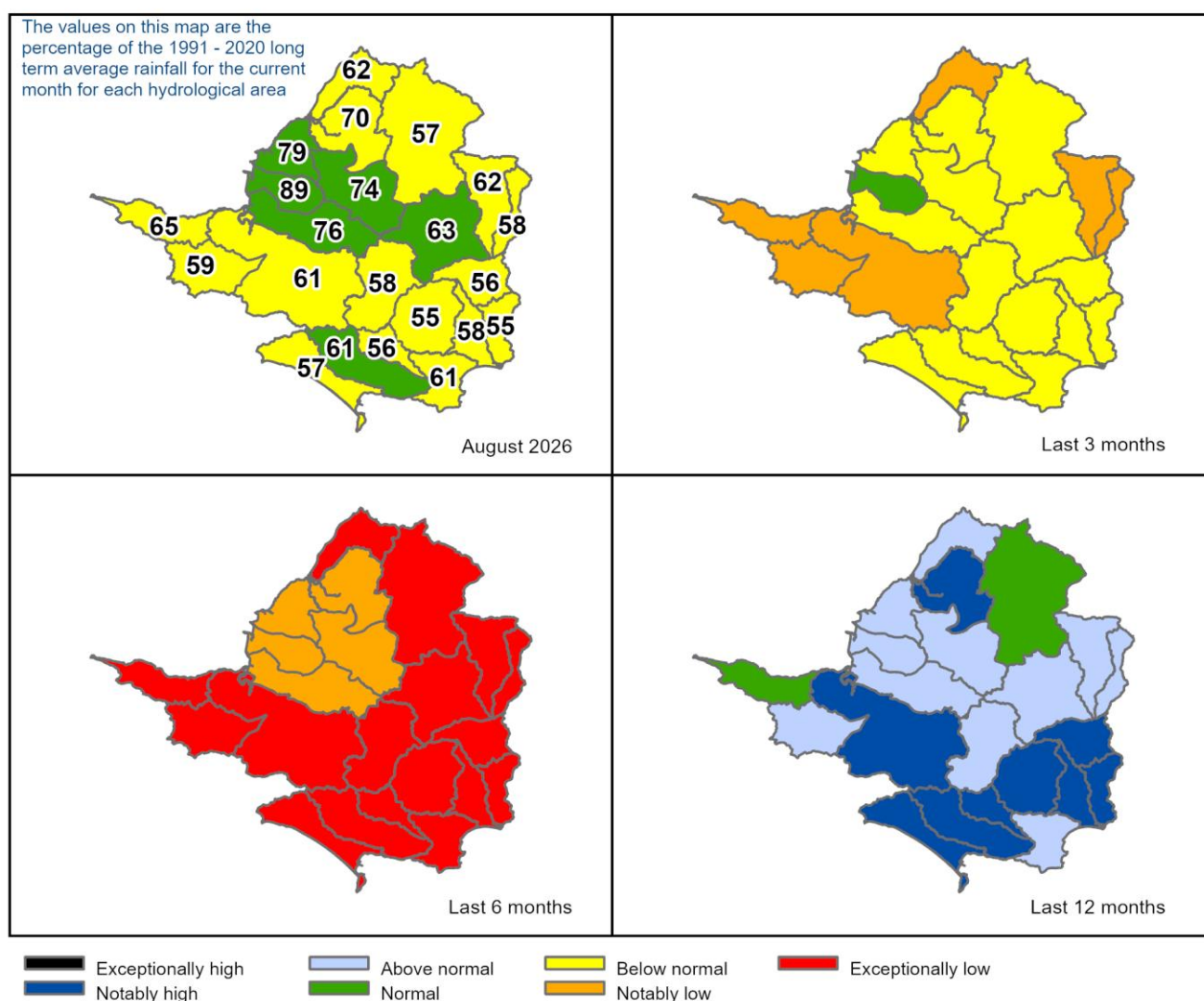
Author: Wessex Area, hydrology.wessex@environment-agency.gov.uk

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2 Rainfall

2.1 Rainfall map

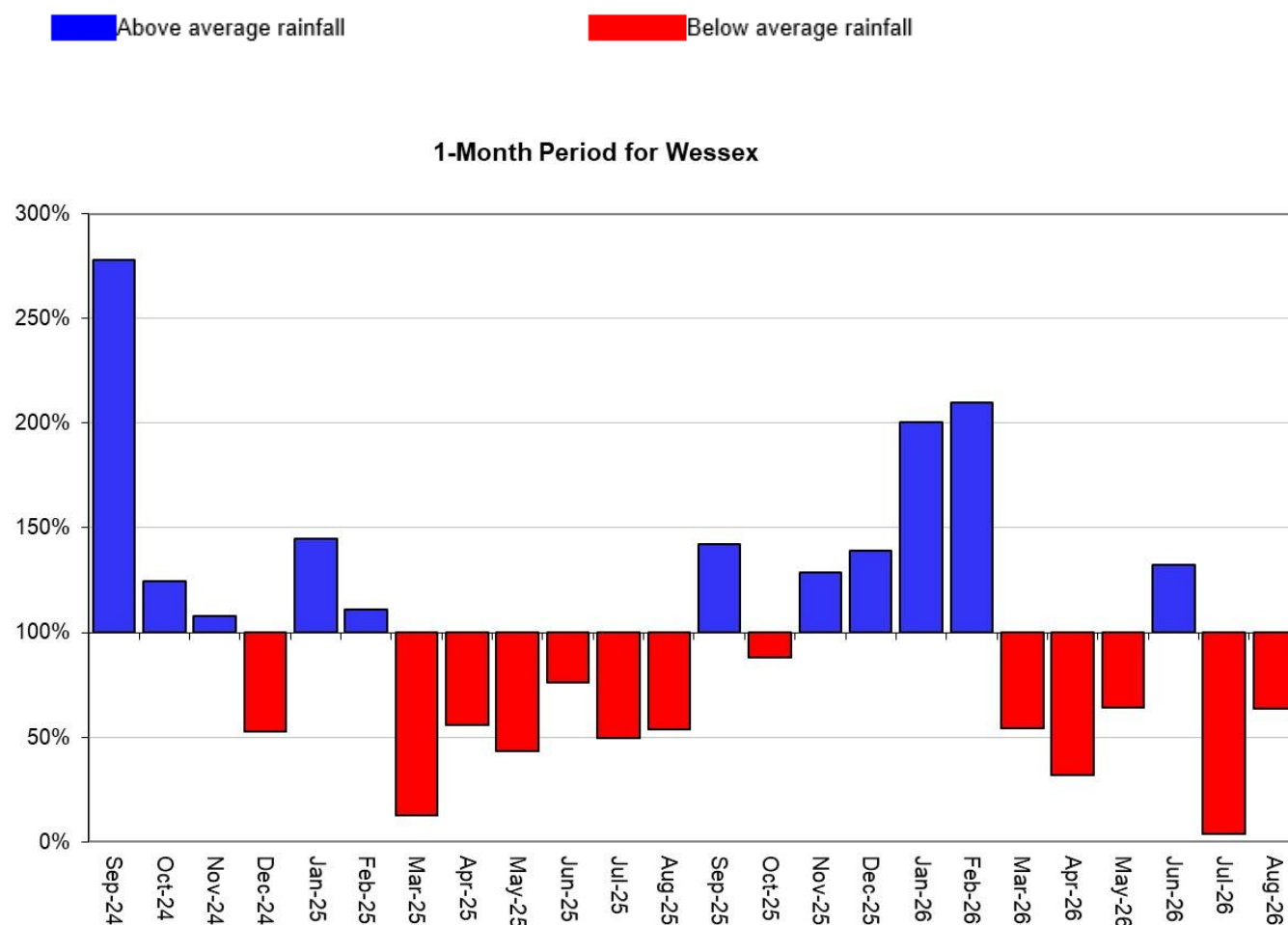
Figure 2.1: Total rainfall for hydrological areas for the current month (up to 31 August 2026), the last 3 months, the last 6 months, and the last 12 months, classed relative to an analysis of respective historic totals between 1991 and 2020. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.



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.

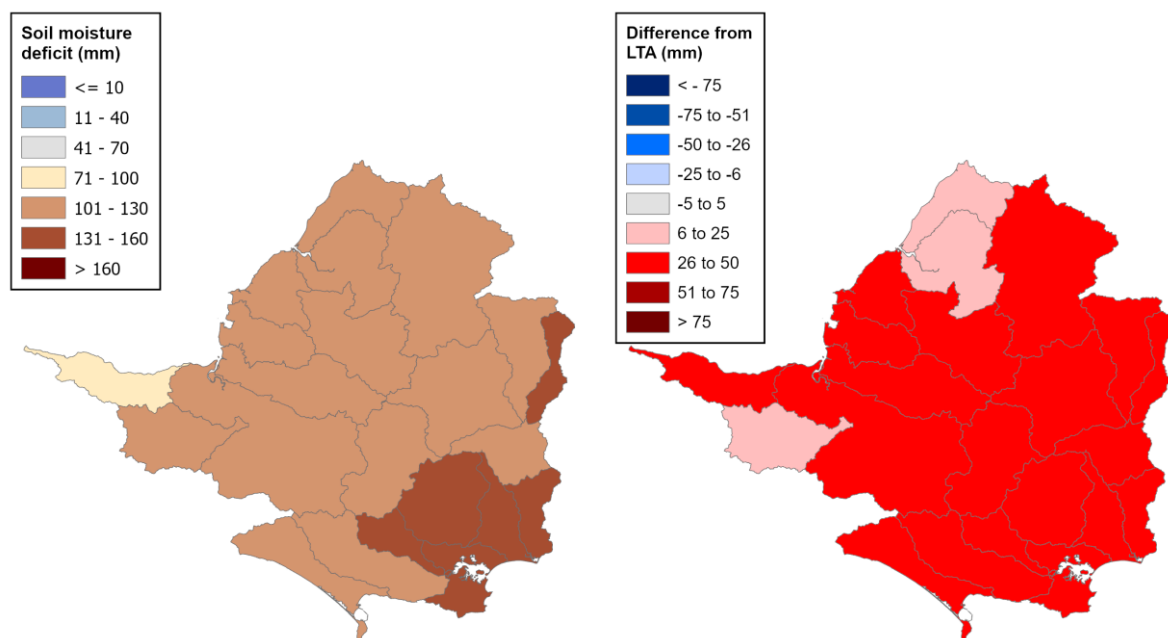


Rainfall data for January 2025 onwards, extracted from Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges. (Source: Environment Agency. Crown Copyright, 100024198, 2026). Rainfall data prior to January 2025, extracted from Met Office HadUK 1km gridded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

3 Soil moisture deficit

3.1 Soil moisture deficit map

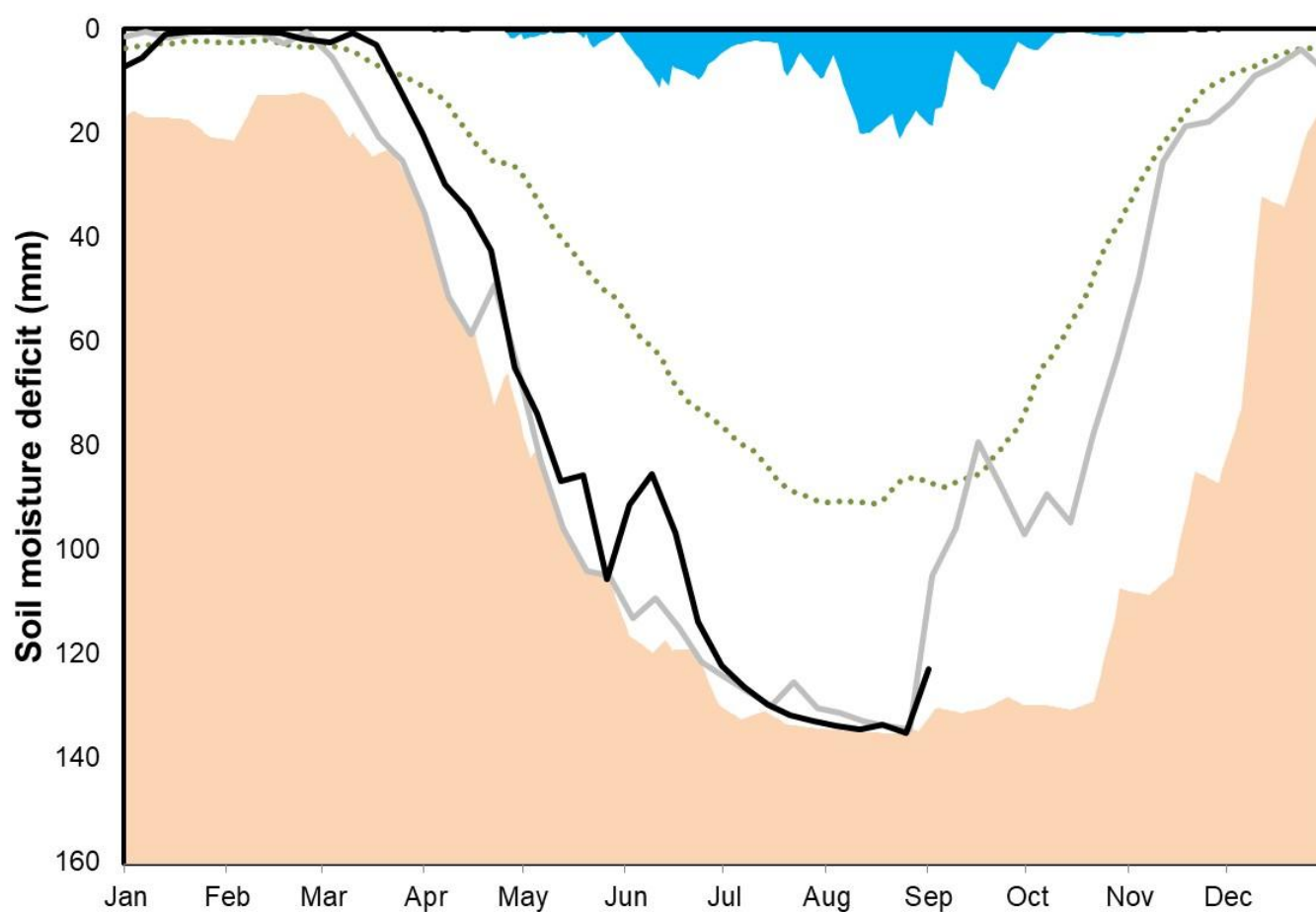
Figure 3.1: Soil moisture deficits for weeks ending 31 August 2026. Shows the difference (mm) of the actual soil moisture deficit from the 1991 to 2020 long term average soil moisture deficits. MORECS data for real land use.



(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.

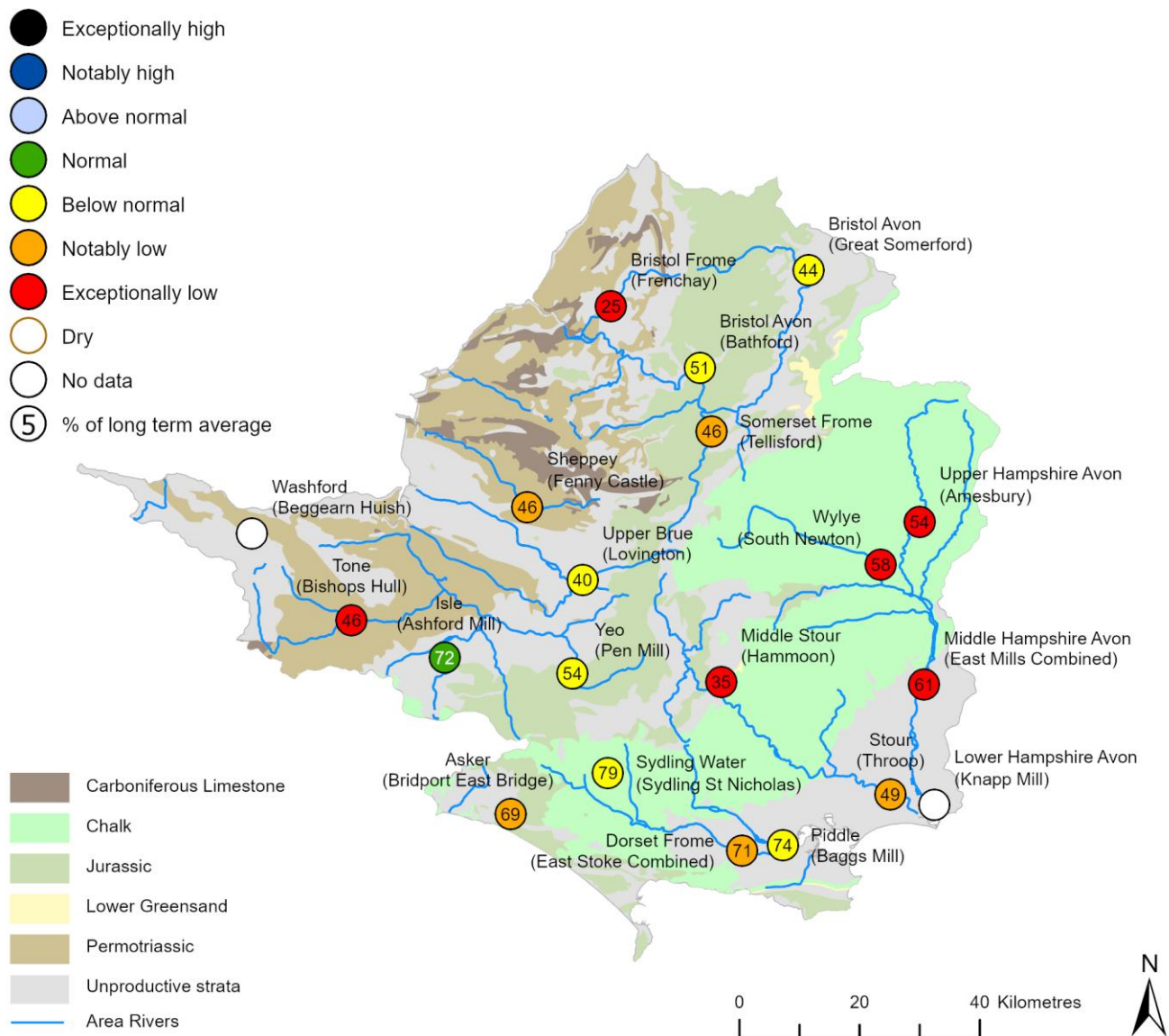


(Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026). All rights reserved. Environment Agency, 100024198, 2026

4 River flows

4.1 River flows map

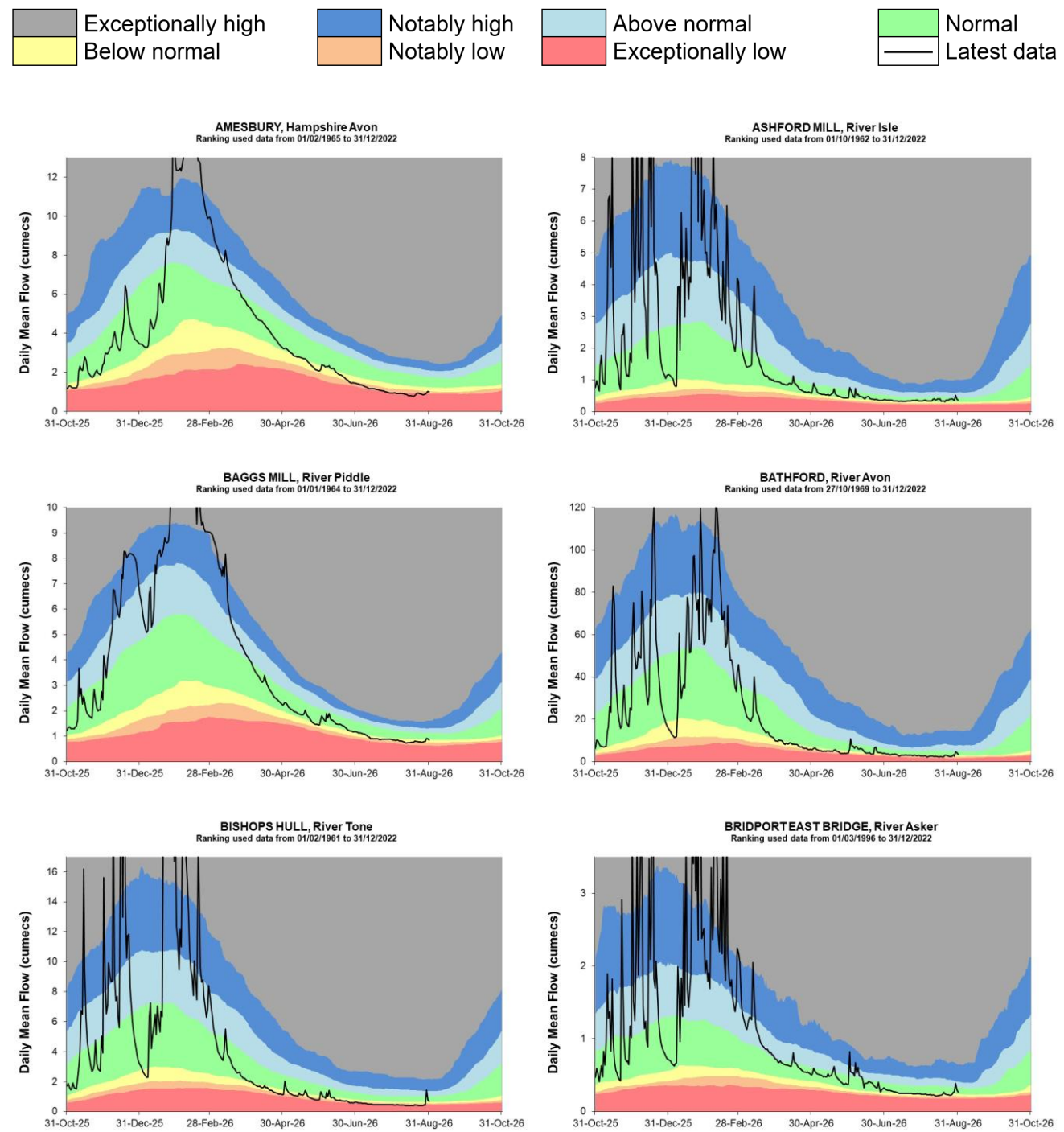
Figure 4.1: Monthly mean river flow for indicator sites for August 2026, expressed as a percentage of the respective long term average and classed relative to an analysis of historic August monthly means Table available in the appendices with detailed information.



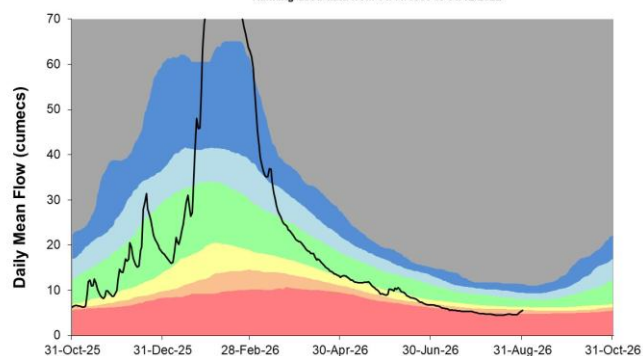
(Source: Environment Agency). Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, AC0000807064, 2026. Flow data at Knapp Mill on the Hampshire Avon and Beggearn Huish on the Washford River is omitted due to data issues.

4.2 River flow charts

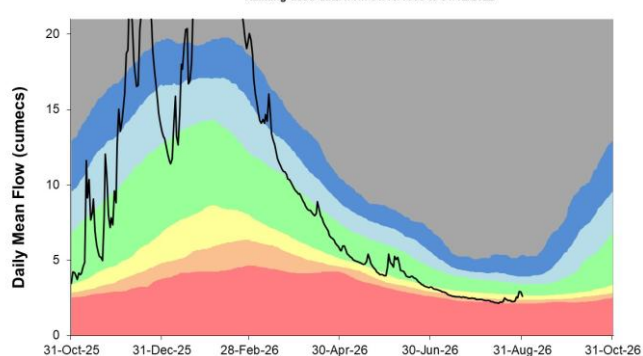
Figure 4.2: Daily mean river flow for index sites over the past year, compared to an analysis of historic daily mean flows.



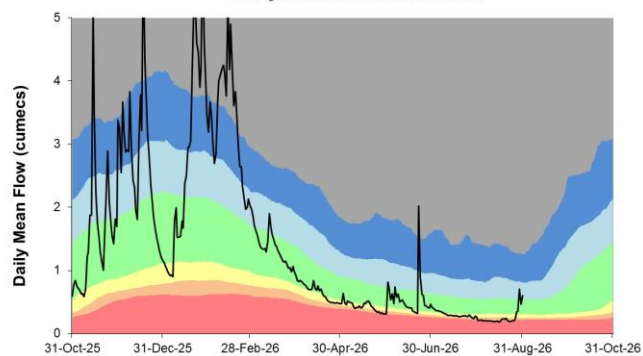
EAST MILLS COMBINED, Hampshire Avon
Ranking used data from 01/11/1965 to 31/12/2022



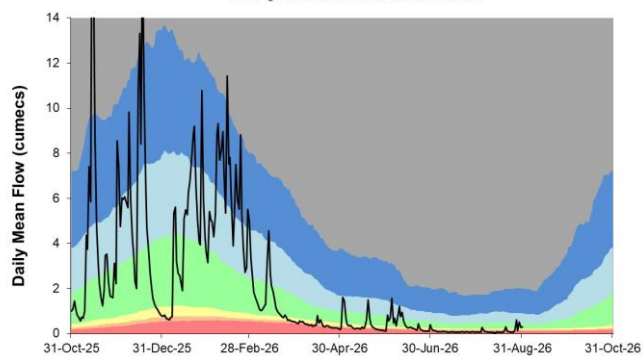
EAST STOKE COMBINED, Dorset Frome
Ranking used data from 01/10/1965 to 31/12/2022



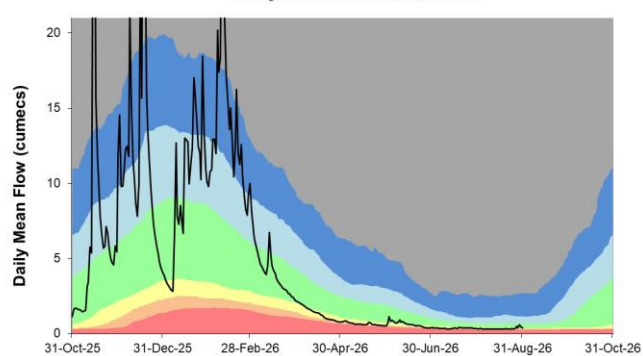
FENNY CASTLE, River Sheppey
Ranking used data from 01/01/1964 to 31/12/2022



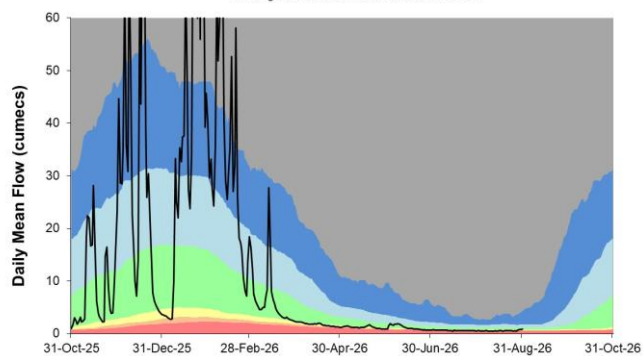
FRENCHAY, Bristol Frome
Ranking used data from 01/09/1961 to 31/12/2022



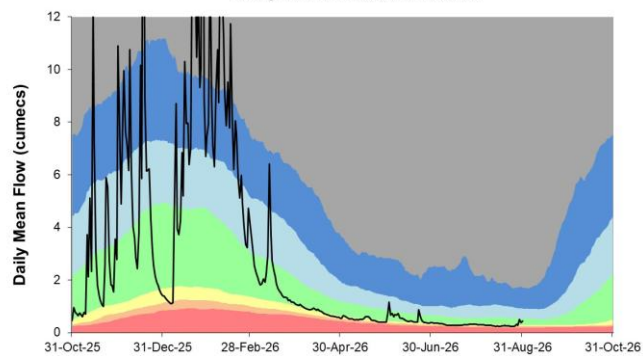
GREAT SOMERFORD, River Avon
Ranking used data from 16/12/1963 to 31/12/2022



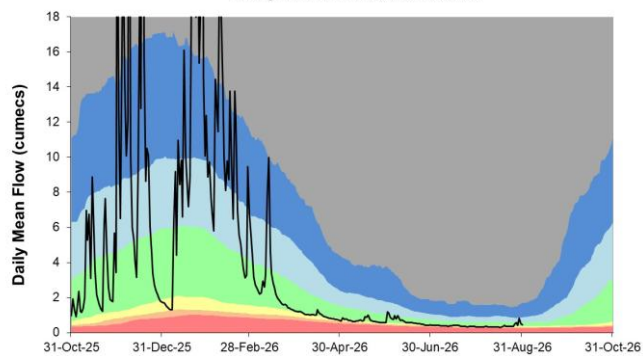
HAMMOON, River Stour
Ranking used data from 01/03/1968 to 31/12/2022

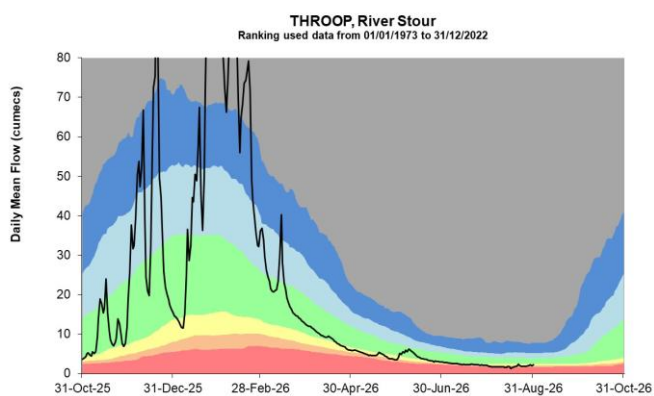
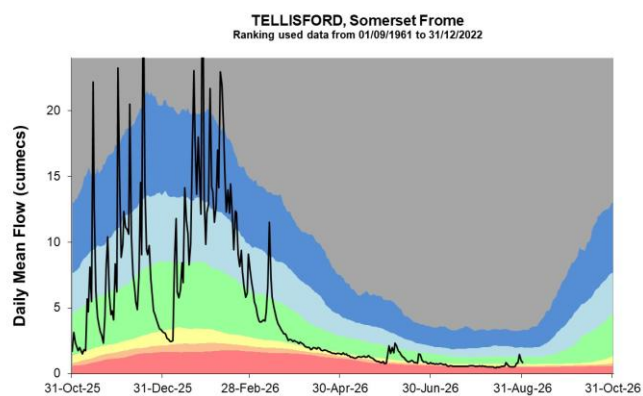
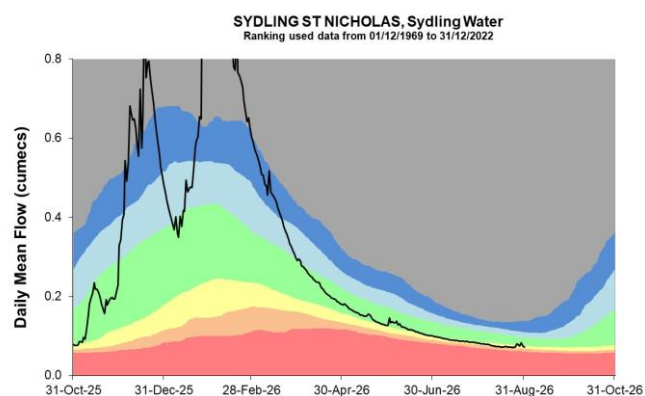
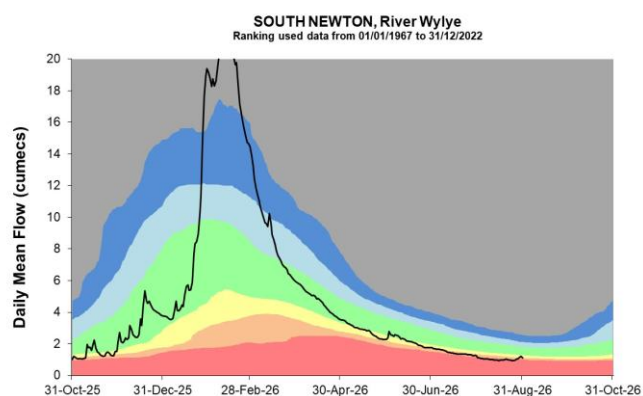


LOVINGTON, River Brue
Ranking used data from 01/10/1964 to 31/12/2022



PEN MILL, Somerset Yeo
Ranking used data from 31/10/1963 to 31/12/2022



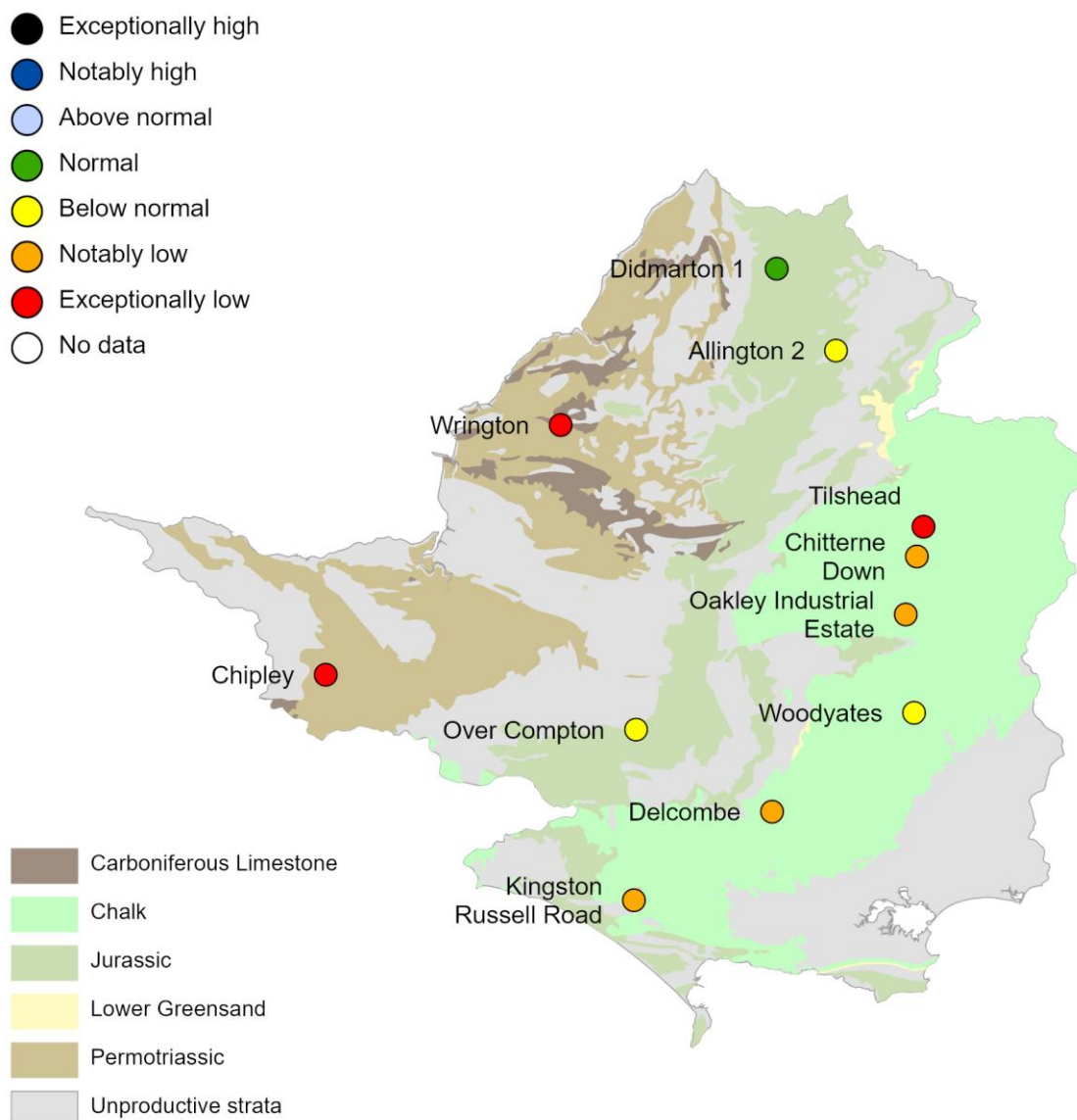


Source: Environment Agency, 2026. Flow data at Knapp Mill on the Hampshire Avon and Beggearn Huish on the Washford River is omitted due to data issues.

5 Groundwater levels

5.1 Groundwater levels map

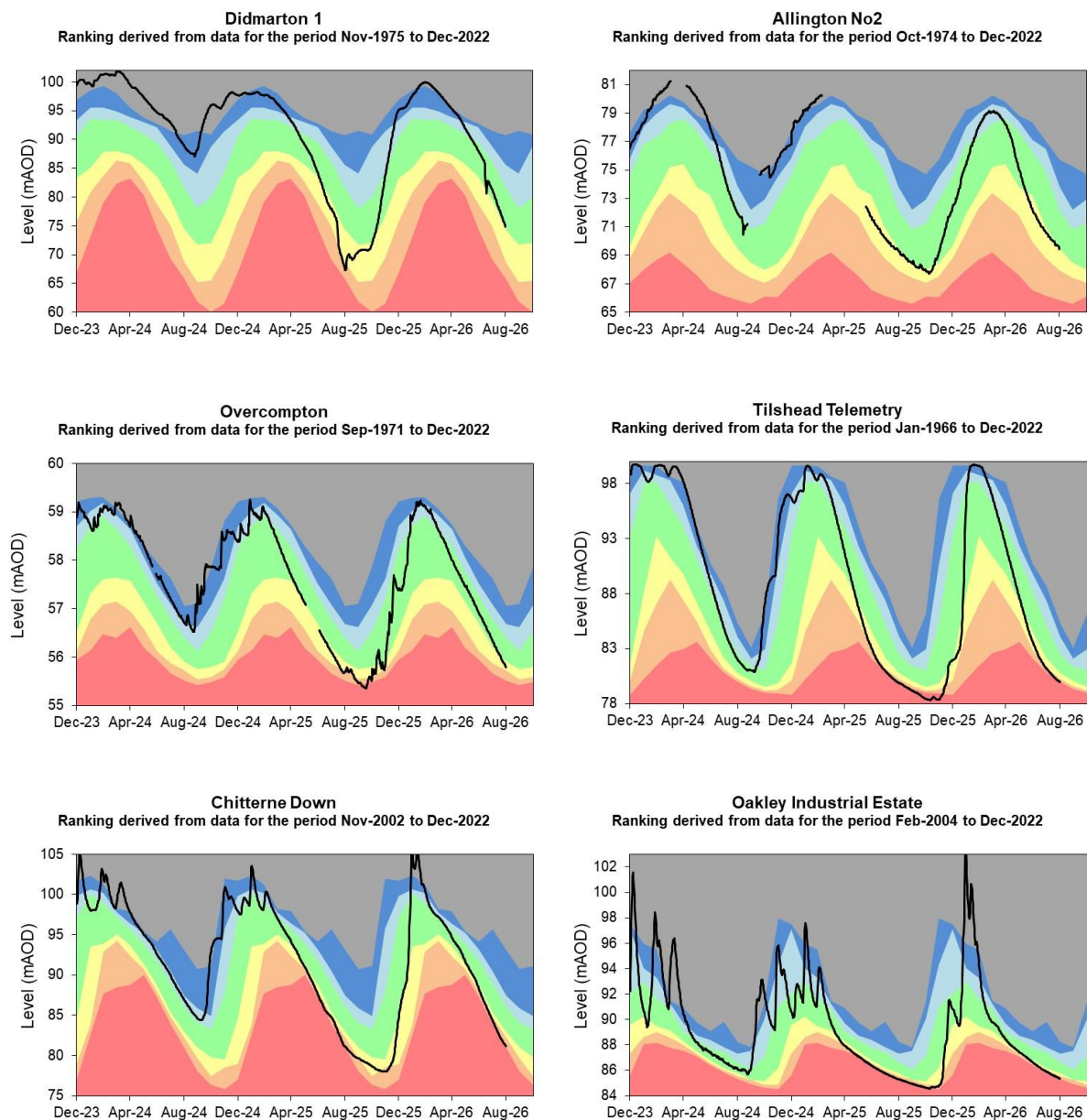
Figure 5.1: Groundwater levels for indicator sites at the end of August 2026, classed relative to an analysis of respective historic end of August levels. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.

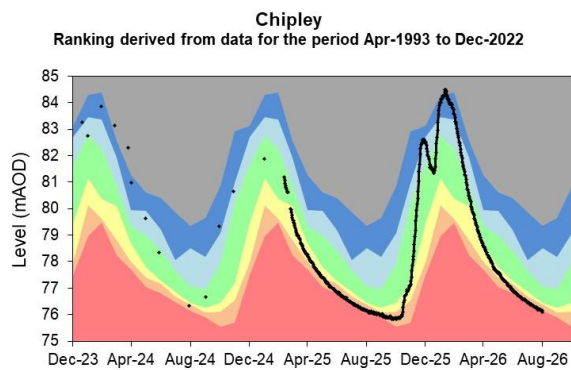
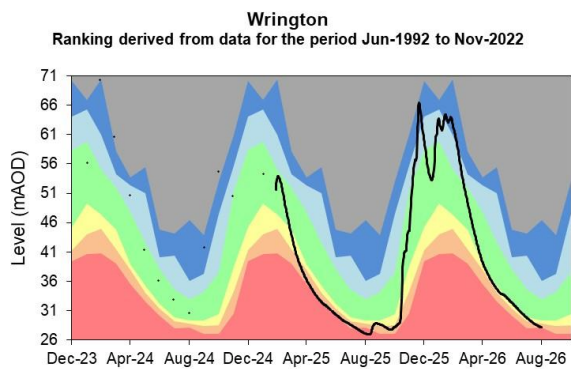
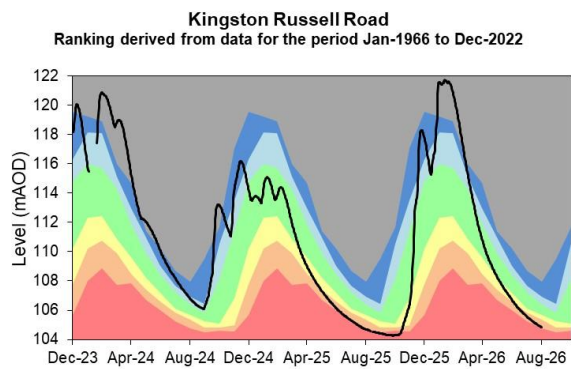
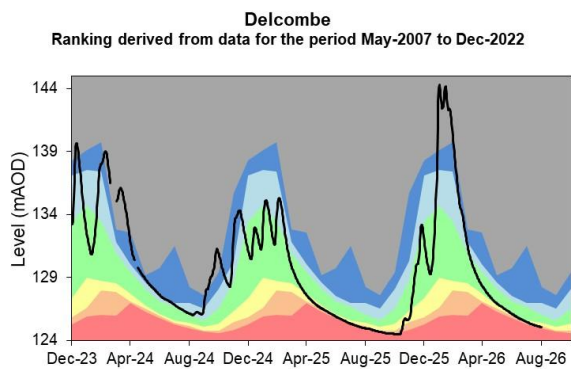
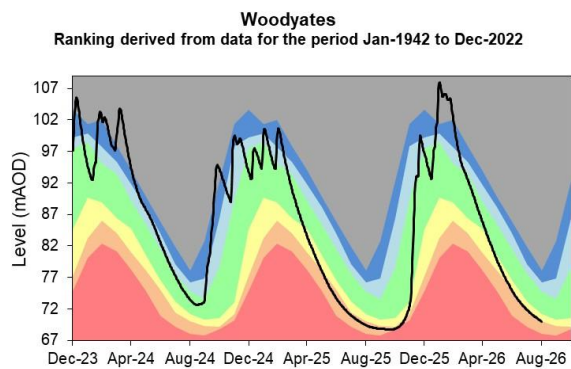


(Source: Environment Agency). Geological map reproduced with kind permission from UK Groundwater Forum, BGS copyright NERC. Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, AC0000807064, 2026.

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.

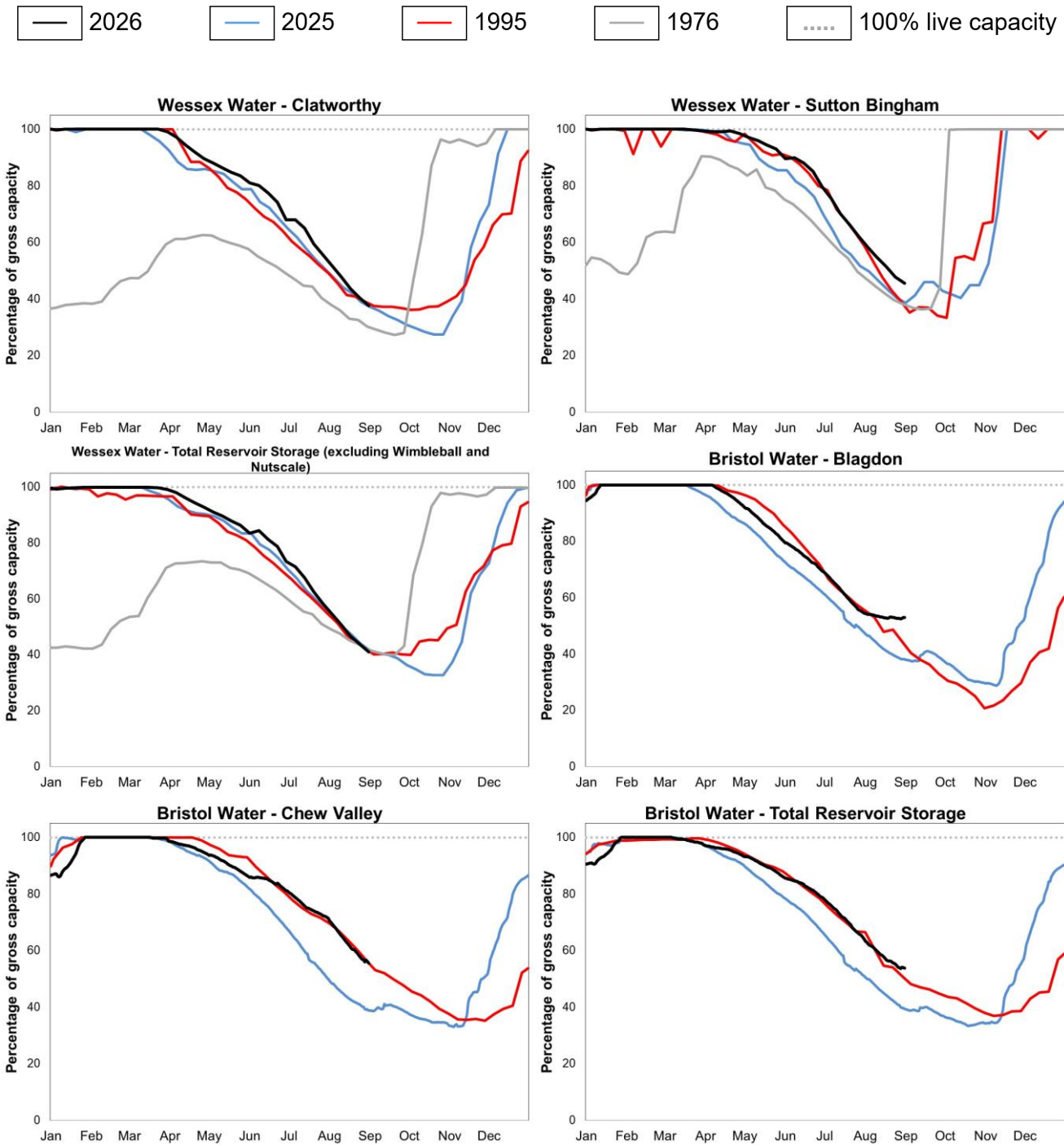




Source: Environment Agency, 2026.

6 Reservoir 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 August

Area	Number of fluvial flood alerts in August	Number of coastal flood alerts in August	Number of groundwater flood alerts in August
North Wessex	0	4	0
South Wessex	0	1	0

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

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

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

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

8 Stream support

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

Catchment	River	Stream support site	Gauging station	End of August 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 August 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 August

August	Number of licences at restrict at the end of August	Number of licences at cease at the end of August
Bristol Avon	1	1
Dorset	3	4
Hampshire Avon	4	8
Somerset	7	16

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	Aug 2026 rainfall % of long term average 1991 to 2020	Aug 2026 band	Jun 2026 to August cumulative band	Mar 2026 to August cumulative band	Sep 2025 to August cumulative band
Axe	89	Normal	Normal	Notably low	Above normal
Brue	76	Normal	Below normal	Notably low	Above normal
Little Avon	62	Below Normal	Notably low	Exceptionally low	Above normal
Lower Bristol Avon And Bristol Frome	70	Below Normal	Below normal	Notably low	Notably high
Lower Dorset Stour And River Crane	58	Below Normal	Below normal	Exceptionally low	Notably high
Lower Hampshire Avon	55	Below Normal	Below normal	Exceptionally low	Notably high
Mendips And River Chew	74	Normal	Below normal	Notably low	Above normal
Middle And Upper Bristol Avon	57	Below Normal	Below normal	Exceptionally low	Normal

Hydrological area	Aug 2026 rainfall % of long term average 1991 to 2020	Aug 2026 band	Jun 2026 to August cumulative band	Mar 2026 to August cumulative band	Sep 2025 to August cumulative band
Middle Dorset Stour	55	Below Normal	Below normal	Exceptionally low	Notably high
Middle Hampshire Avon	56	Below Normal	Below normal	Exceptionally low	Notably high
Parrett	61	Below Normal	Notably low	Exceptionally low	Notably high
Poole Harbour And Purbeck	61	Below Normal	Below normal	Exceptionally low	Above normal
River Bourne	58	Below Normal	Notably low	Exceptionally low	Above normal
River Frome	61	Normal	Below normal	Exceptionally low	Notably high
River Piddle	56	Below Normal	Below normal	Exceptionally low	Notably high
Tone	59	Below Normal	Notably low	Exceptionally low	Above normal
Upper Dorset Stour	58	Below Normal	Below normal	Exceptionally low	Above normal
Upper Hampshire Avon	62	Below Normal	Notably low	Exceptionally low	Above normal

Hydrological area	Aug 2026 rainfall % of long term average 1991 to 2020	Aug 2026 band	Jun 2026 to August cumulative band	Mar 2026 to August cumulative band	Sep 2025 to August cumulative band
West Dorset Streams	57	Below Normal	Below normal	Exceptionally low	Notably high
West Somerset Streams	65	Below Normal	Notably low	Exceptionally low	Normal
Wylfe And Nadder	63	Normal	Below normal	Exceptionally low	Above normal
Yeo And Kenn	79	Normal	Below normal	Notably low	Above normal

11.2 River flows table

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

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

11.3 Groundwater table

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