Monthly water situation report: Devon and Cornwall Area

1 Summary - September 2026

Devon and Cornwall received 77mm of rain during September. This is 87% of the September long term average (LTA), which is normal for the time of year. Devon and Cornwall experienced the eighth driest 7 months (March to September) in a 155-year record. Soil moisture deficit (SMD) decreased overall but remained higher (drier) than the LTA throughout September. September monthly mean flows ranged from exceptionally low to normal across the area. Groundwater levels ended the month between exceptionally high and notably low for the time of year. Total reservoir storage across Devon and Cornwall on 27 September was 37%, with Wimbleball, Colliford and Roadford at 21%, 39% and 43% respectively.

1.1 Rainfall

Devon and Cornwall received 77mm of rain during September (87% of the September LTA), which is normal for the time of year. All hydrological areas recorded normal rainfall totals for the time of year, other than the Exe and Otter, Sid, Axe and Lim which recorded below normal rainfall totals (66% and 58% of the September LTA respectively). The highest rainfall totals for Devon and Cornwall were on the 7th and 29th of the month.

Cumulative rainfall for the last 3 months was notably low for most of the area. The Exe, Teign and Torbay and Otter, Sid, Axe and Lim hydrological areas recorded exceptionally low 3-month cumulative rainfall totals. North Cornwall was the only area to record a below normal 3-month cumulative rainfall total. Over the past 6 months, cumulative rainfall was below normal for the majority of the area. The Avon, Dart and Erme and Taw and North Devon Streams areas recorded notably low 6-month cumulative rainfall totals. The Exe, Teign and Torbay and Otter, Sid, Axe and Lim areas recorded exceptionally low 6-month cumulative rainfall totals. Over the past 12 months, cumulative rainfall was notably high for most of the area. Torridge and Hartland Streams and Teign and Torbay areas recorded above normal 12-month cumulative rainfall totals, with Exe and Taw and North Devon areas recording normal 12-month cumulative rainfall totals.

Devon and Cornwall experienced the eighth driest 7 months (March to September) in a 155-year record. It was the second driest 7 months on record in the Exe and Otter, Sid, Axe and Lim area, and the third driest 7 months on record in the Teign and Torbay area.

1.2 Soil moisture deficit

SMD in Devon and Cornwall decreased overall (soils became wetter) during September. At the end of September, SMD was considerably higher (drier) than the LTA for this time of year.

At the end of September, SMD ranged from 101mm to 130mm in the Exe hydrological area and 131mm to 160mm in the Otter, Sid, Axe and Lime hydrological area. All other hydrological areas had an SMD of 71 to 100mm. The SMD in the majority of Devon and Cornwall was 26mm to 50mm higher than the LTA for the time of year. SMD was 51mm to 75mm higher than the LTA for the time of year in the Teign and Torbay, Exe and Otter, Sid, Axe and Lim hydrological areas. SMD was 6 to 25mm higher than the LTA for the time of year in the West Cornwall and Seaton, Looe and Fowey hydrological areas.

1.3 River flows

September monthly mean river flows were classed as exceptionally low to normal across Devon and Cornwall. Chudleigh Bridge on the river Teign, St Erth on the river Hayle and Umberleigh on the River Taw recorded exceptionally low September monthly mean river flows.

Daily mean flows were higher at the end of September than at the end of August due to the rainfall received in September, with peaks in flow at the beginning and end of the month in response to the highest rainfall totals on the 7th and 29th of the month. Daily mean flows on 30 September were between normal and below normal, with the exception of the East Dart River at Bellever recording above normal flow. Flows at Gwills on the river Gannel, Bodmin Dunmere on the river Camel and Chudleigh Bridge on the river Teign increased from exceptionally low on 28 September to normal on 30th September. The East Dart River at Bellever increased from notably low on 28 September to above normal on 30 September as a result of considerable rainfall on 29 September.

1.4 Groundwater levels

On 29 September, groundwater levels were classed as follows:

- Notably low at Winnards Perch (monitoring the Staddon Formation)
- Below normal at Coleford Production (monitoring the Permian Breccias and Sandstones)
- Normal at Bussels No7A (monitoring the Dawlish sandstone), Woodleys No1 (monitoring the Otterton Sandstone Formation) and Woodbury Common No2 (monitoring the Budleigh Salterton Pebble Beds)
- Above normal at Branscombe Lane (monitoring the Dawlish Sandstone)
- Exceptionally high at Whitlands (monitoring the Upper Greensand)

Groundwater levels are lower at the ‘secondary aquifer’ sites (Winnards Perch and Coleford Production) than at the other sites, which are ‘Principal Aquifer’. This is because Secondary Aquifers have a lower storage and respond more rapidly to a lack of recharge from rainfall.

1.5 Reservoir stocks

Total reservoir storage was 37% on 27 September, which is an overall decrease of 11% since the end of August. This is higher than storage at the end of September 2022 (the most recent drought year), which was 33%. On 27 September, storage at Wimbleball, Colliford and Roadford was 21%, 39% and 43% respectively, compared to 24%, 21% and 39% at the same time in 2022.

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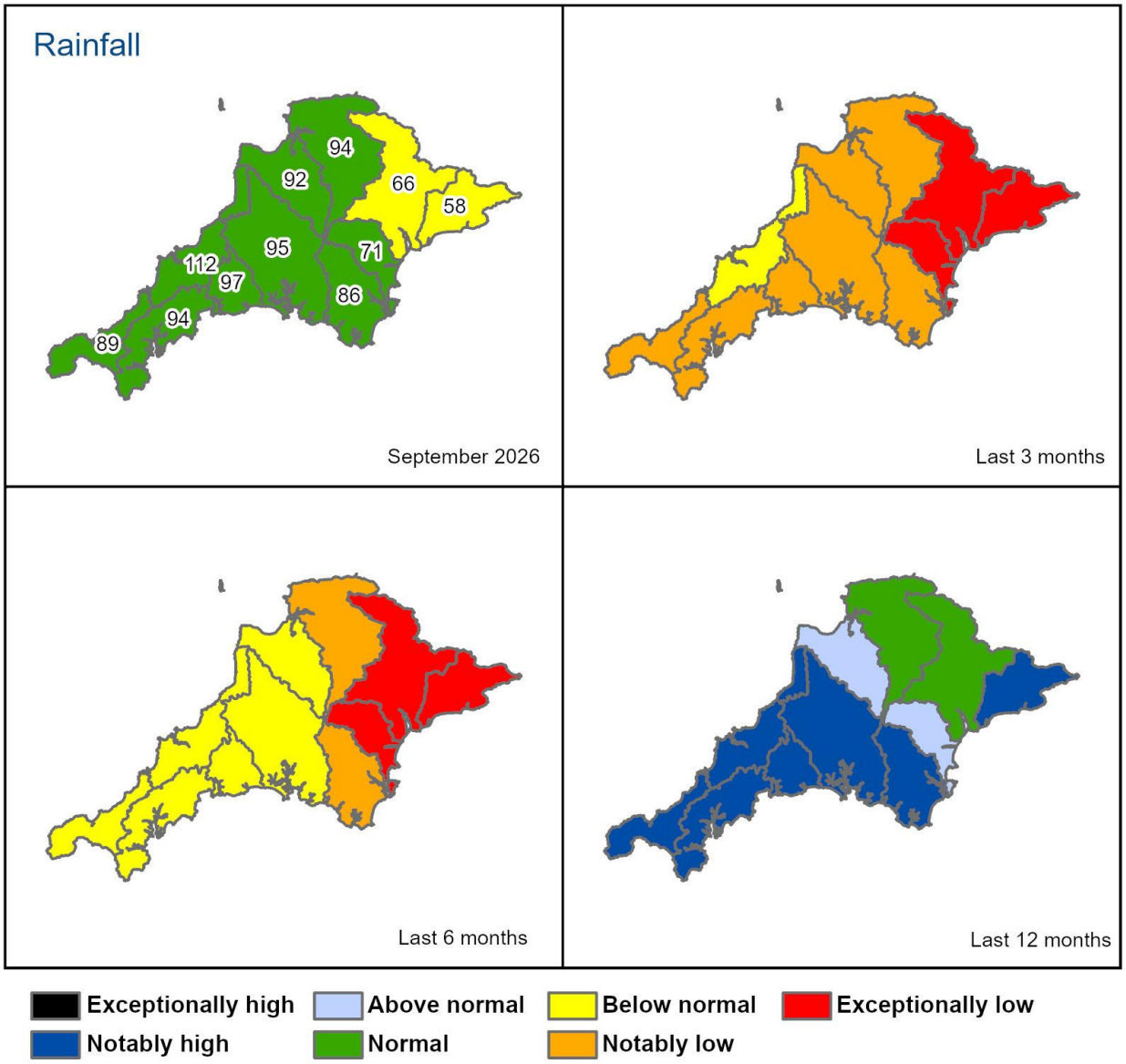
2 Rainfall

2.1 Rainfall map

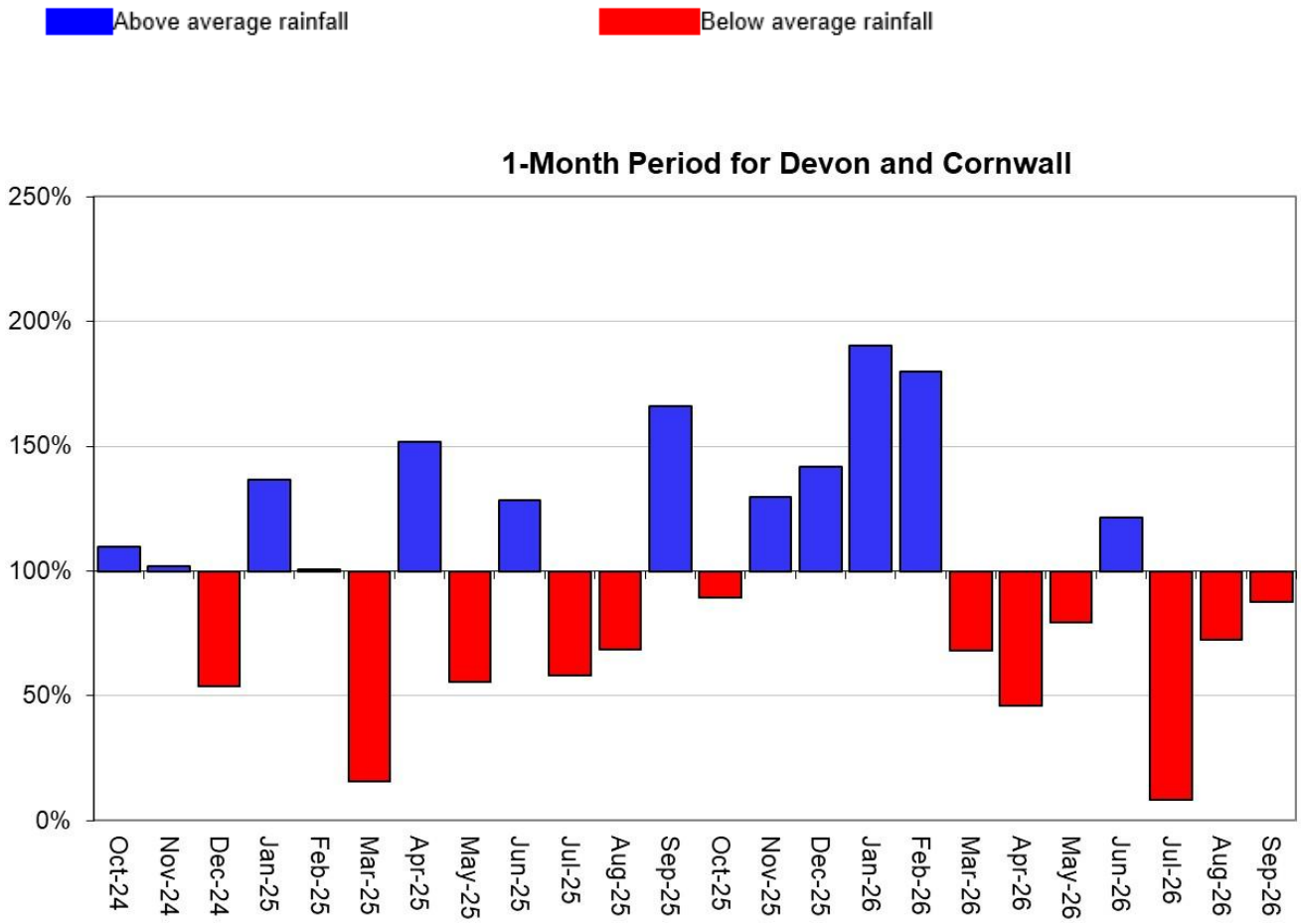
Figure 2.1: Total rainfall for hydrological areas for the current month (up to 30 September 2026), the last 3 months, the last 6 months, and the last 12 months, classed relative to an analysis of respective historic totals. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.



HadUK data based on the Met Office 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from rain gauges (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026). Provisional data based on Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges. Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, AC0000807064, 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 Devon and Cornwall area.

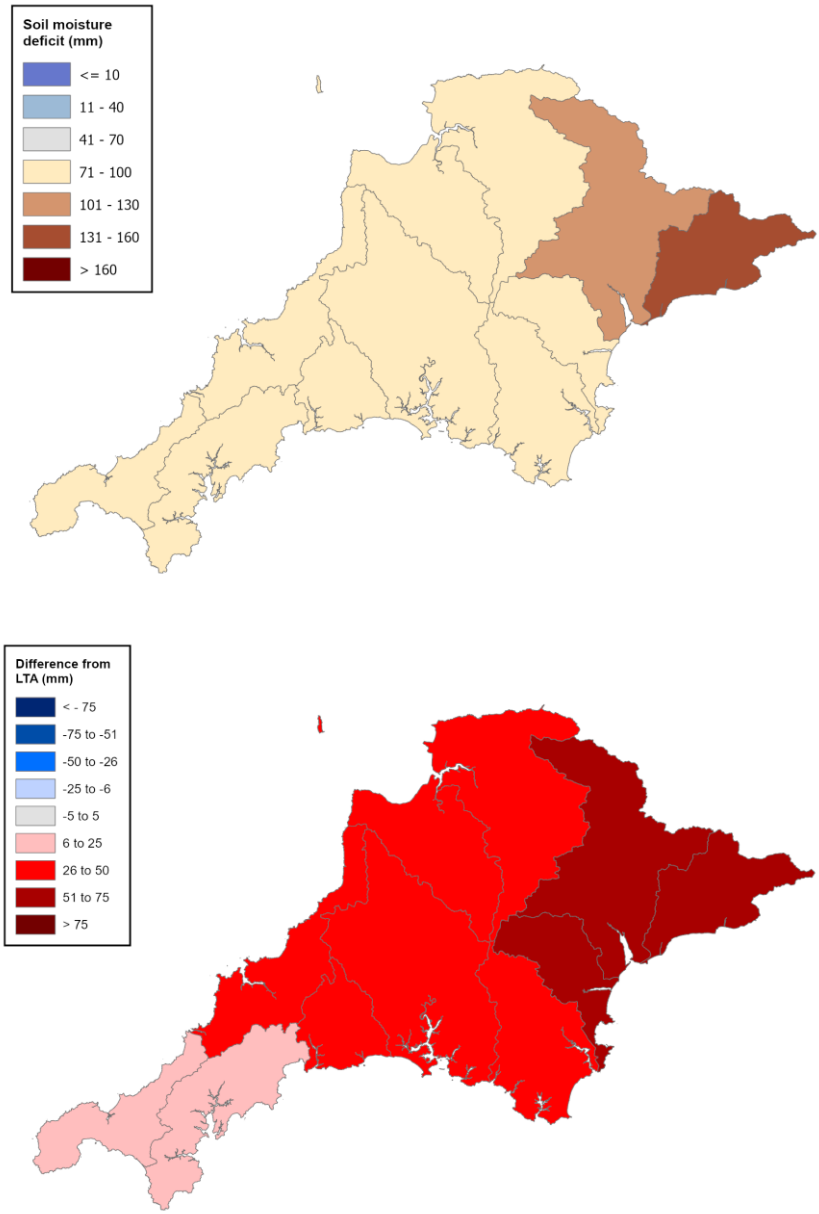


Rainfall data for 2026 extracted from Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges (Source: Environment Agency. Crown Copyright, AC0000807064, 2026). Rainfall data prior to 2023, extracted from Met Office HadUK 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived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

3 Soil moisture deficit

3.1 Soil moisture deficit map

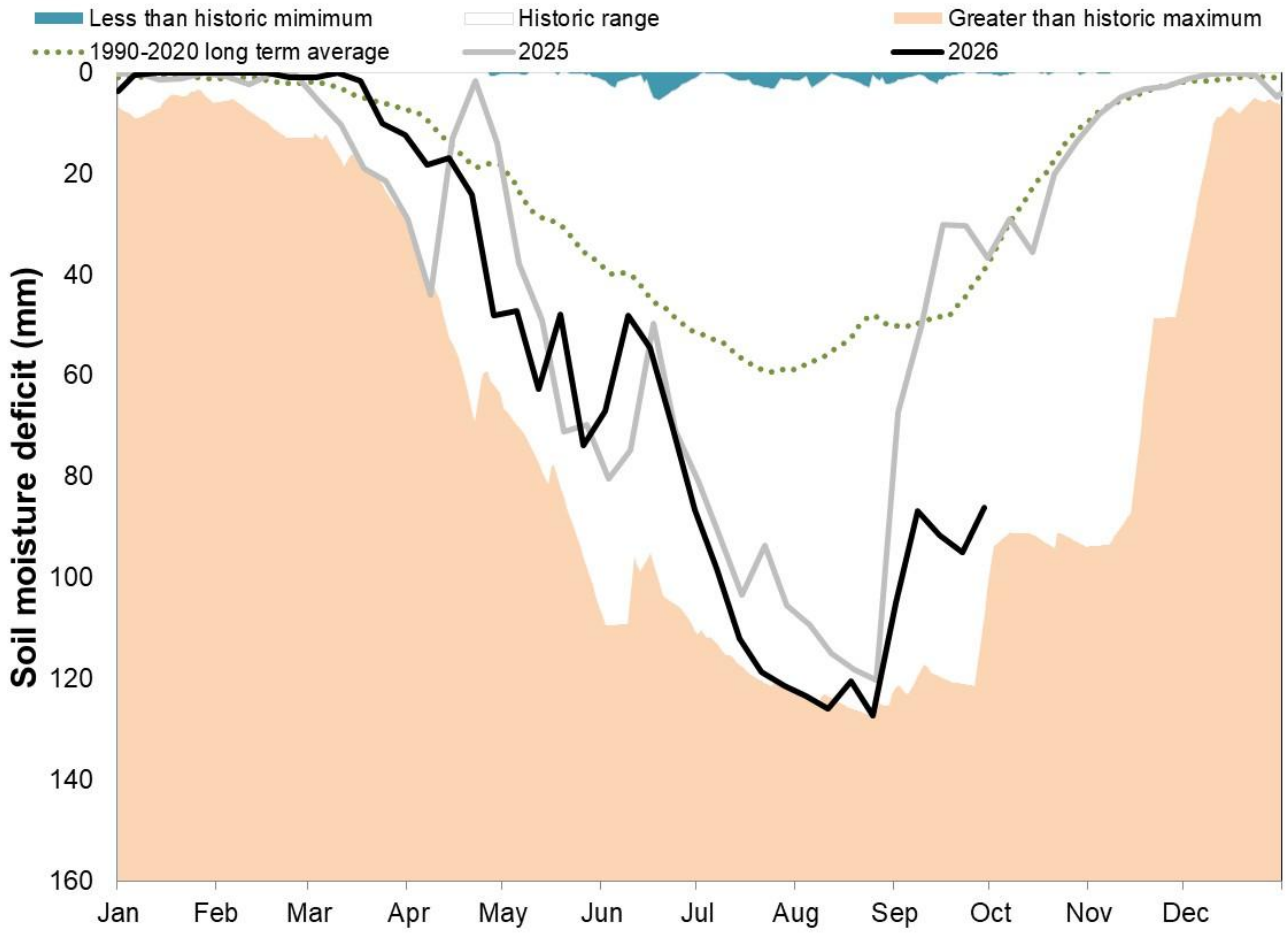
Figure 3.1: Top map shows soil moisture deficit for week ending 30 September 2026. Bottom map shows the difference (mm) between the actual soil moisture deficit and the 1991 to 2020 long term average soil moisture deficits. MORECS data for real land use.



(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.

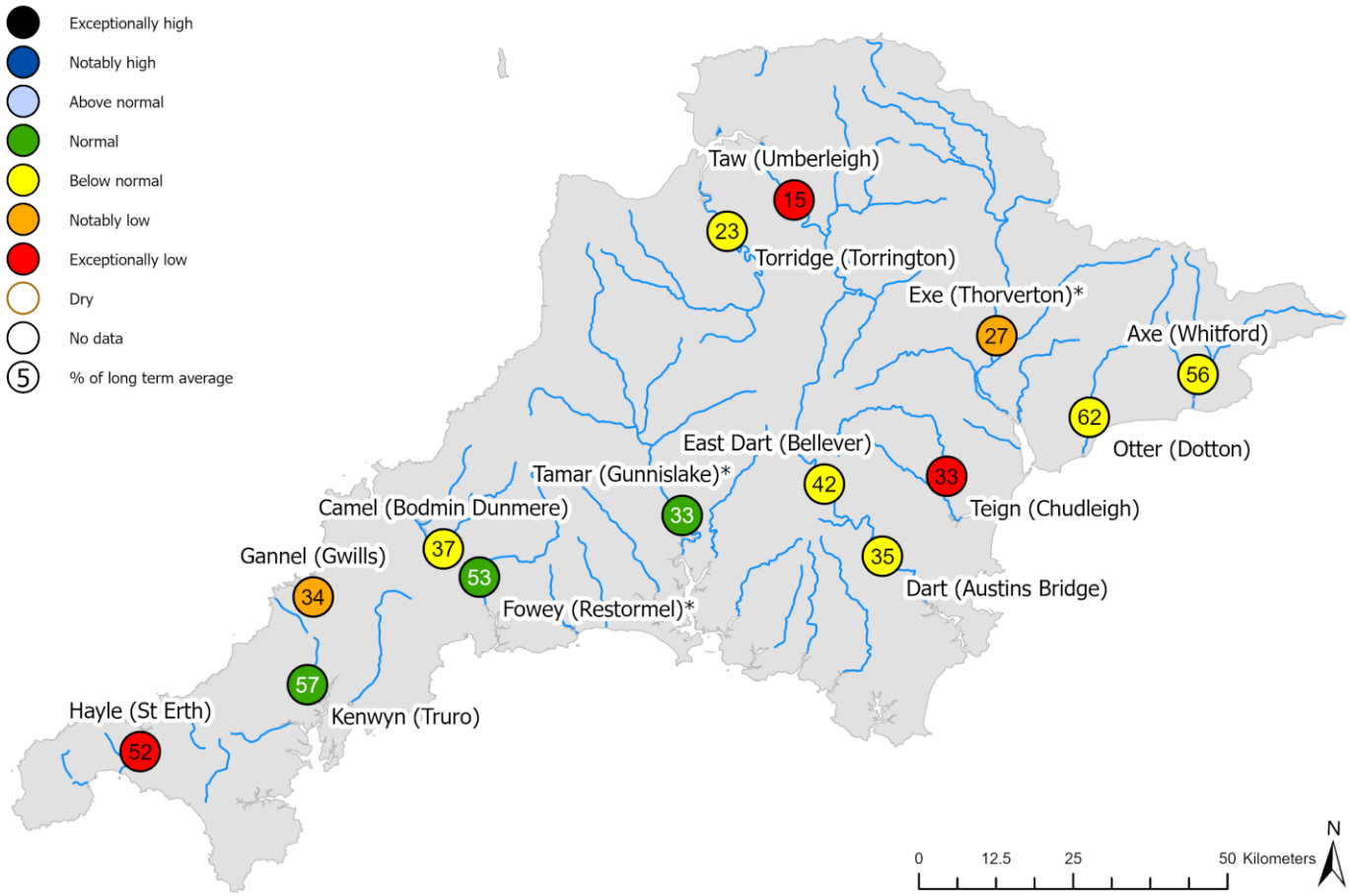


(Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026). All rights reserved. Environment Agency, AC0000807064, 2026

4 River flows

4.1 River flows map

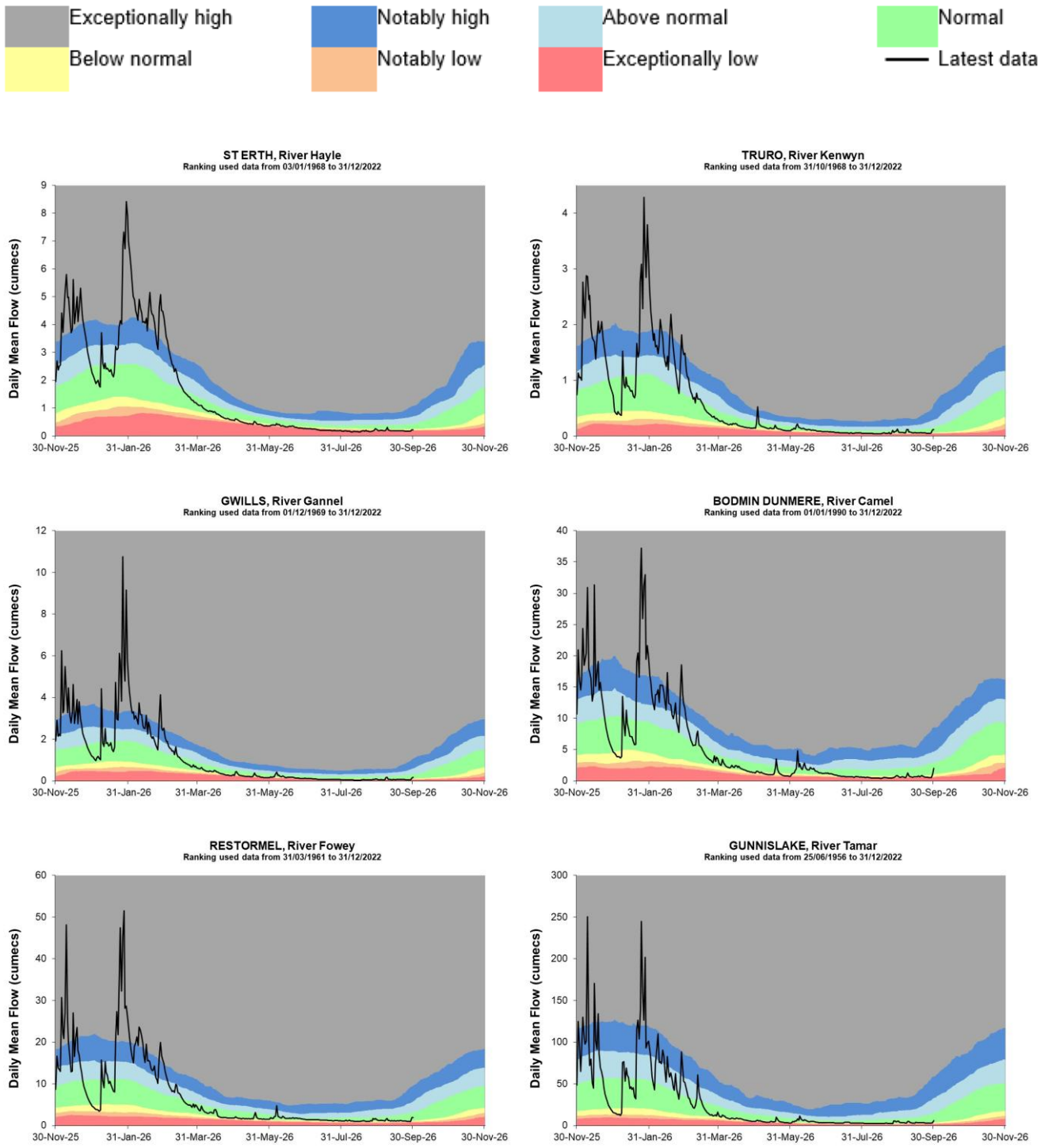
Figure 4.1: Monthly mean river flow for indicator sites for September 2026, expressed as a percentage of the respective long term average and classed relative to an analysis of historic September monthly means. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.

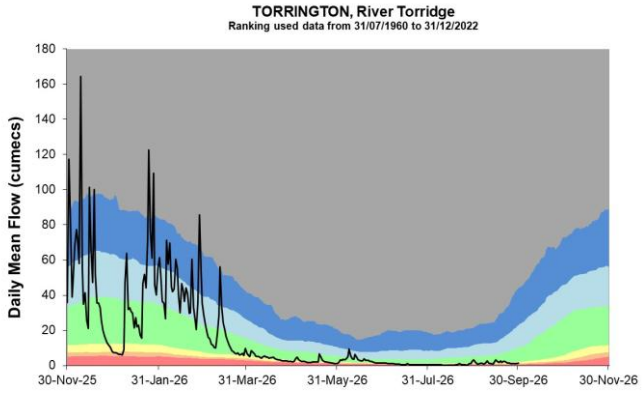


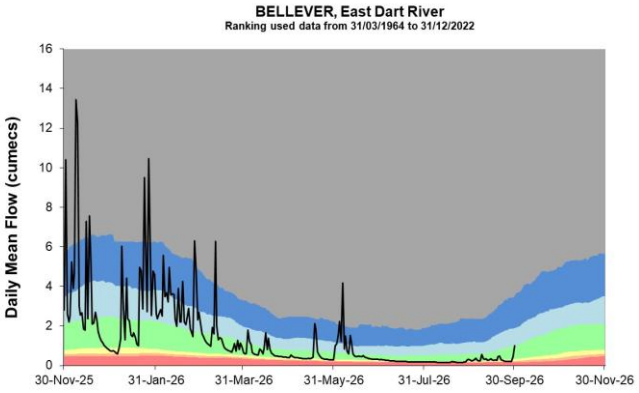
(Source: Environment Agency). Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, AC0000807064, 2026.

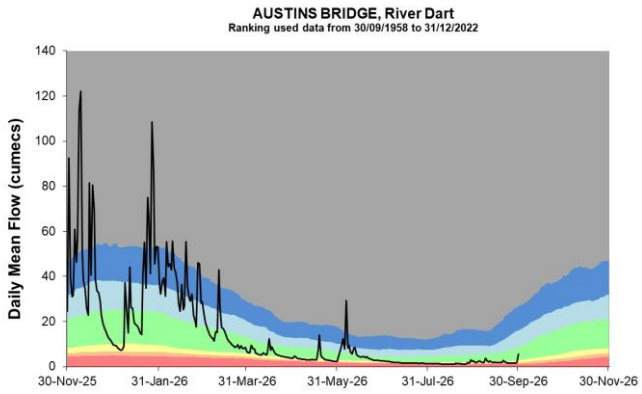
4.2 River flow charts

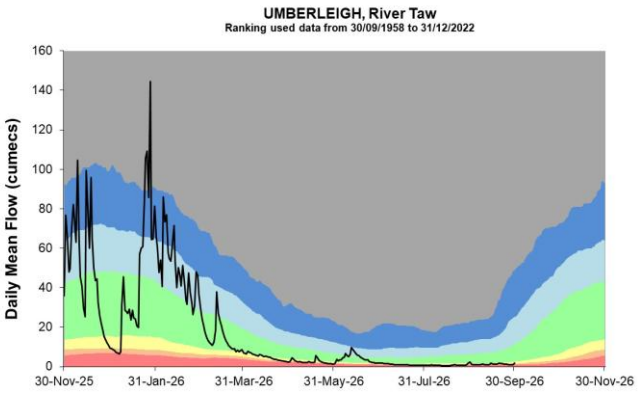
Figure 4.2: Daily mean river flow for indicator sites over the past year, compared to an analysis of historic daily mean flows, and long term maximum and minimum flows.

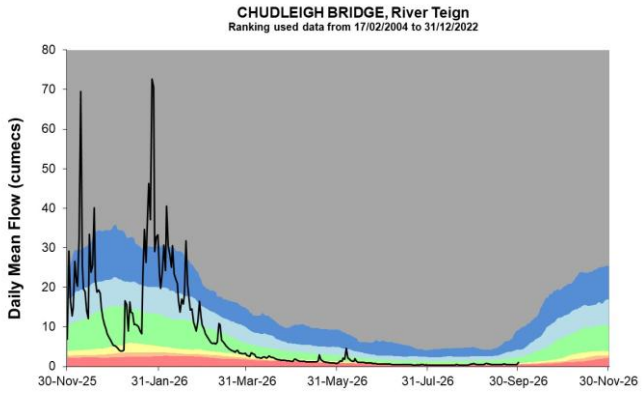


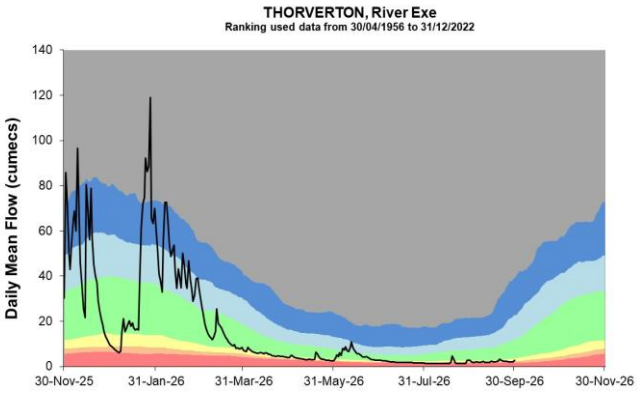


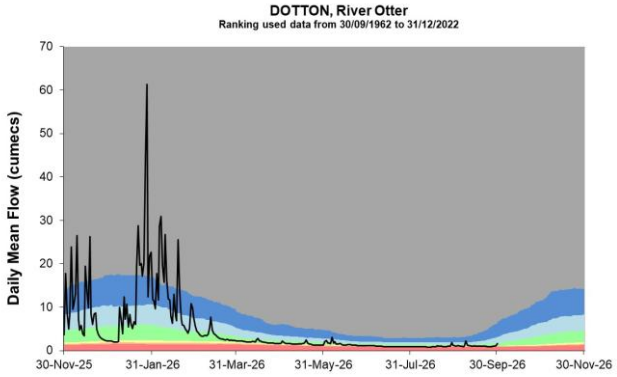


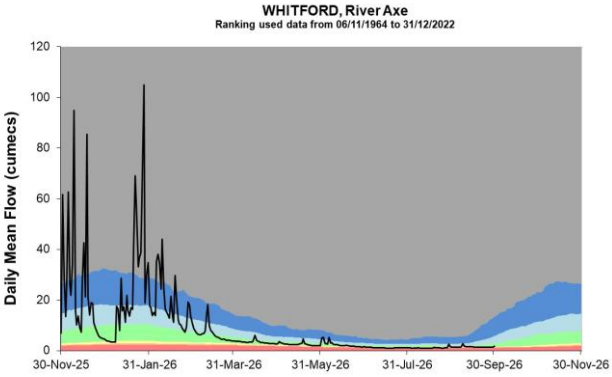










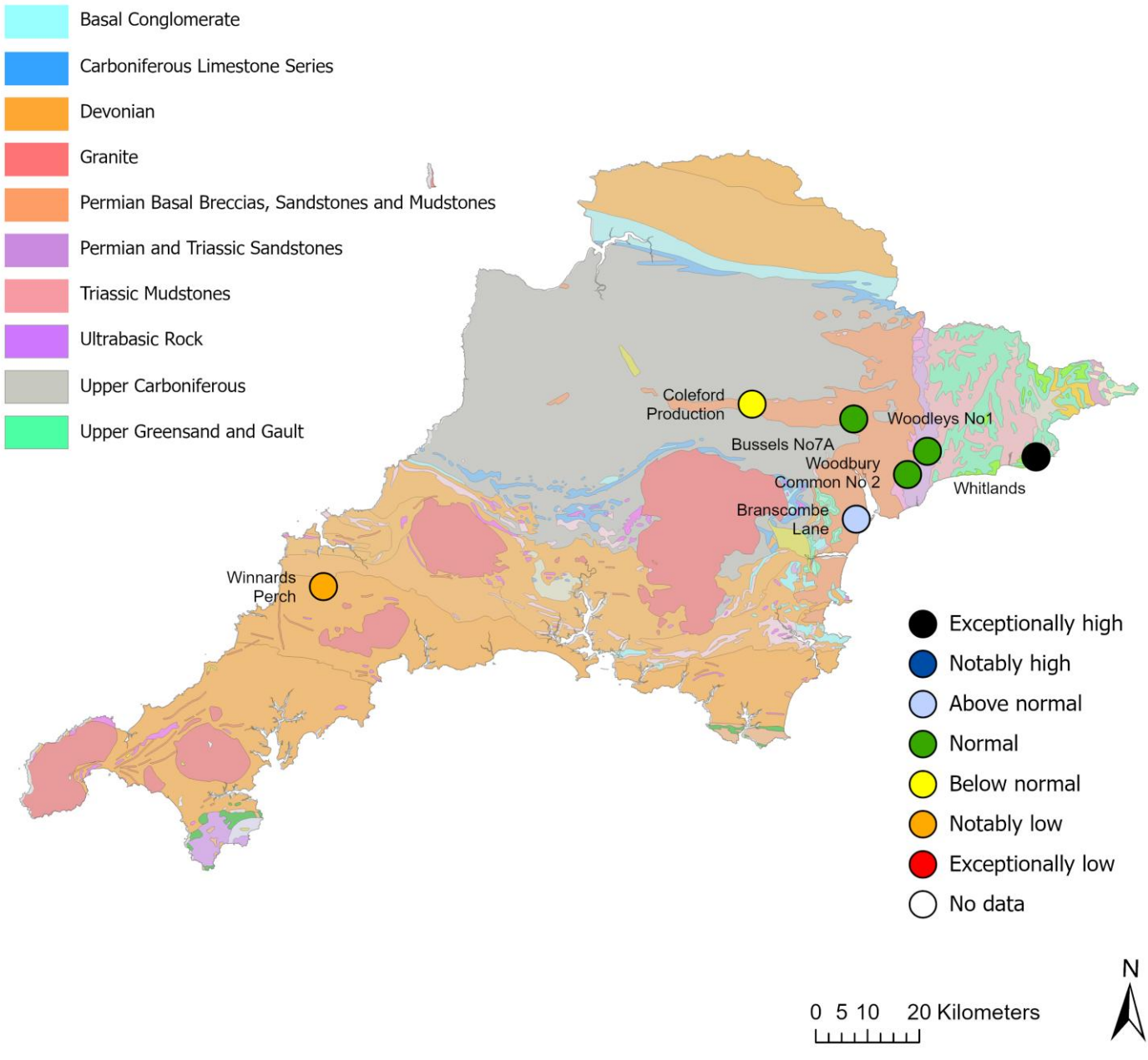


Source: Environment Agency.

5 Groundwater levels

5.1 Groundwater levels map

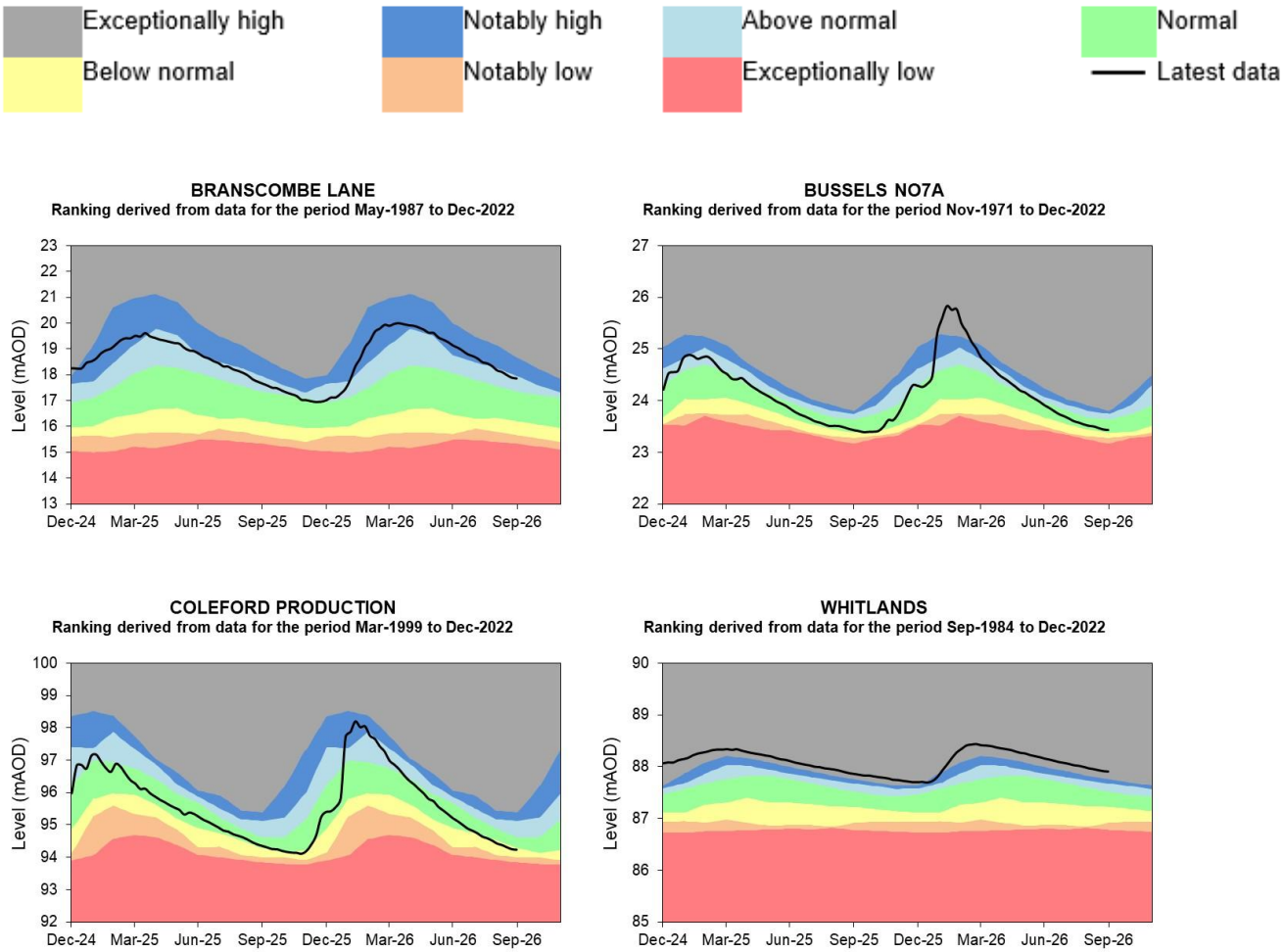
Figure 5.1: Groundwater levels for indicator sites at the end of September 2026, classed relative to an analysis of respective historic September levels. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.

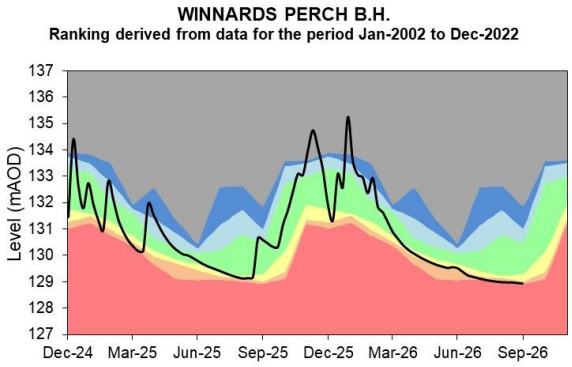


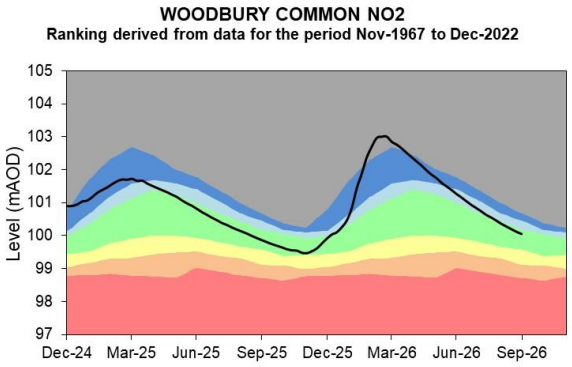
(Source: Environment Agency). Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, AC0000807064, 2026.

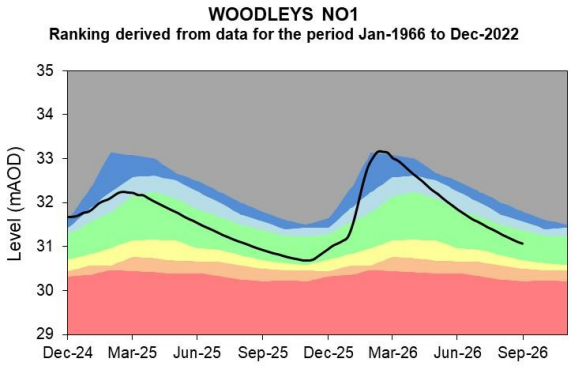
5.2 Groundwater level charts

Figure 5.2: End of month groundwater levels at index groundwater level sites for major aquifers. 22 months compared to an analysis of historic end of month levels and long term maximum and minimum levels.





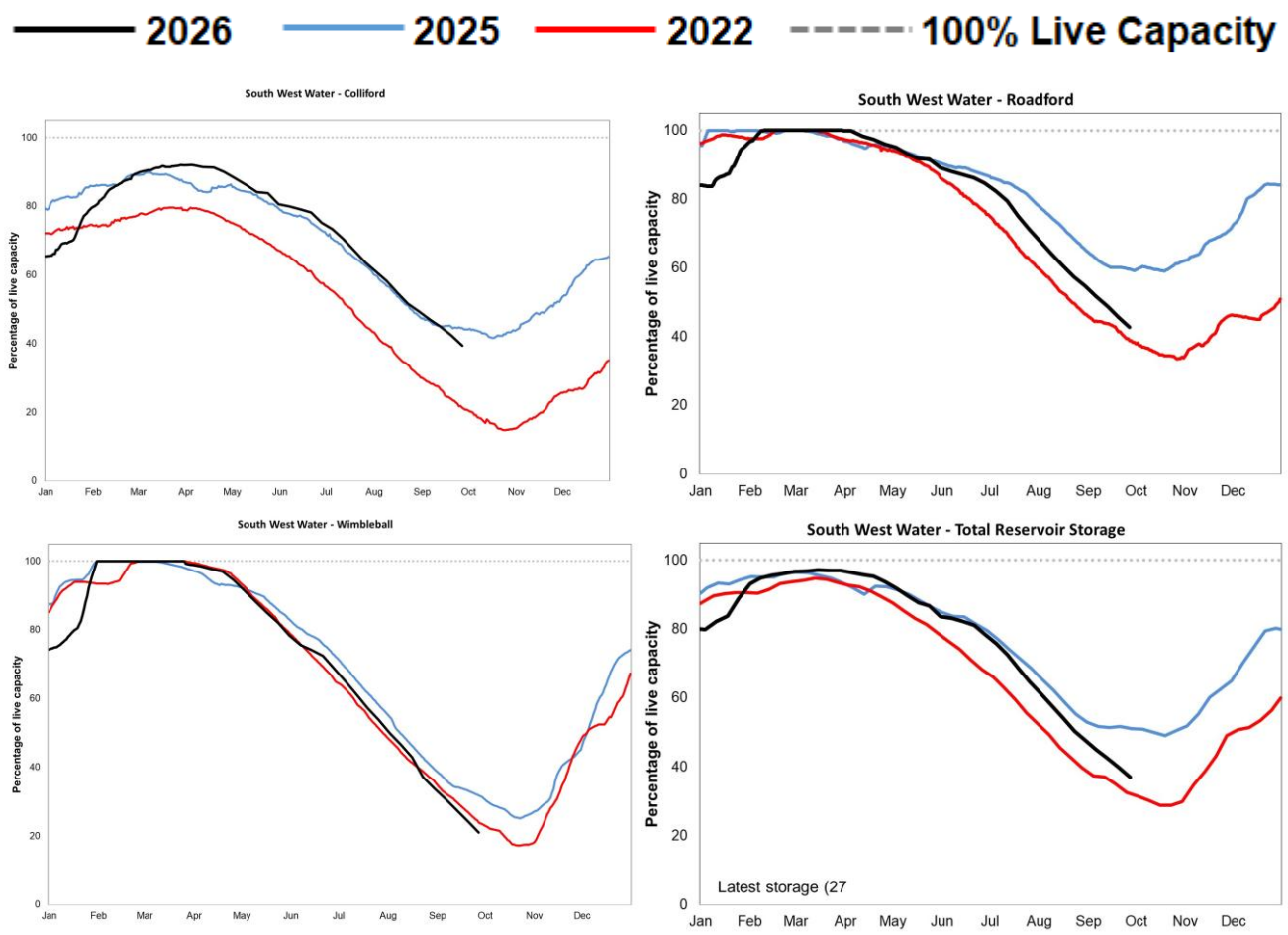




Source: Environment Agency, 2026.

6 Reservoir stocks

Figure 6.1: End of month reservoir storage compared to previous year and a historic drought year. Note: Historic records of individual reservoirs vary in length.



(Source: South West Water).

7 Glossary

7.1 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).

7.2 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.

8 Appendices

8.1 Rainfall table

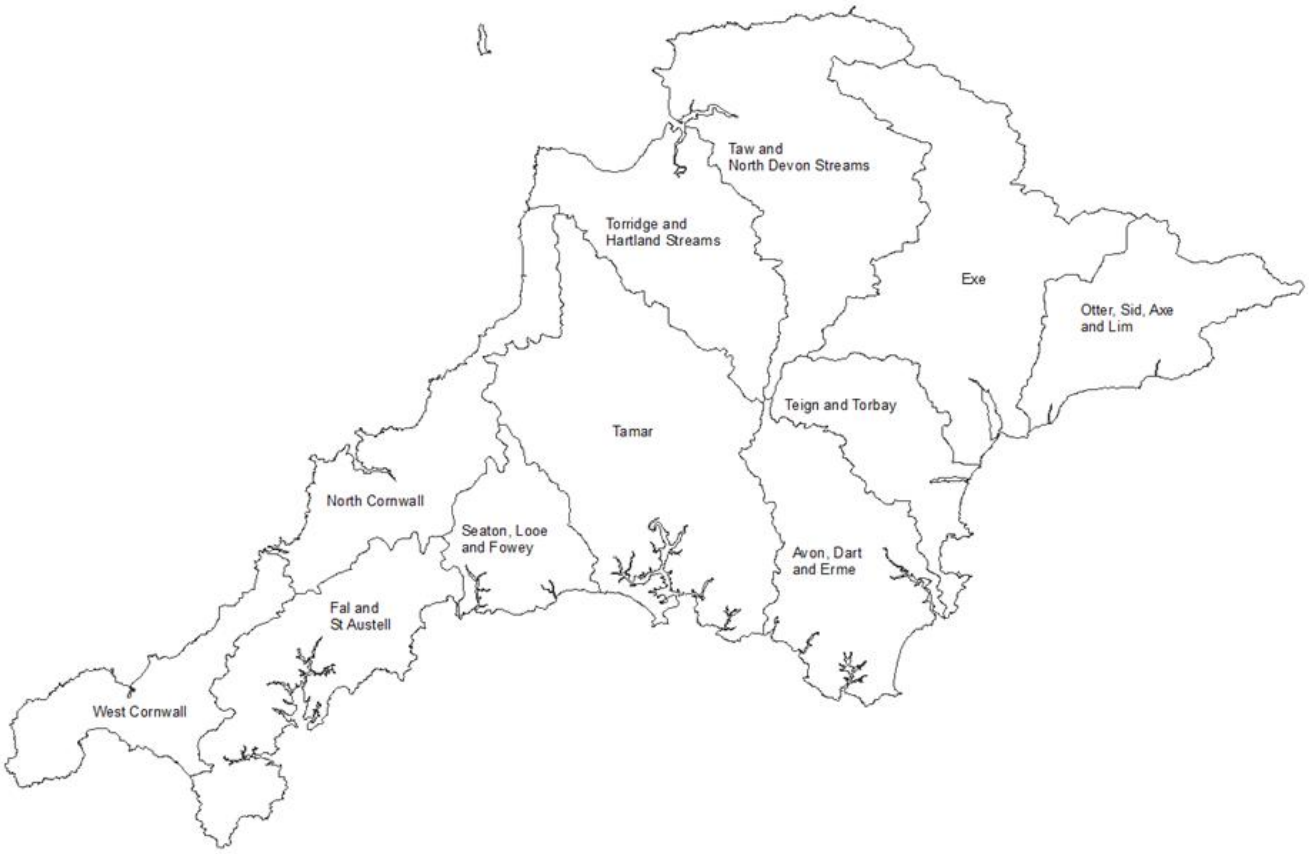
Hydrological area	Sep 2026 rainfall % of long term average 1991 to 2020	Sep 2026 band	Jul 2026 to September cumulative band	Apr 2026 to September cumulative band	Oct 2025 to September cumulative band
Avon Dart And Erme	86	Normal	Notably low	Notably low	Notably high
Exe	66	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Normal
Fal And St Austell	94	Normal	Notably low	Below normal	Notably high
North Cornwall	112	Normal	Below normal	Below normal	Notably high
Otter Sid Axe And Lim	58	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Notably high
Seaton Looe And Fowey	97	Normal	Notably low	Below normal	Notably high
Tamar	95	Normal	Notably low	Below normal	Notably high
Taw And North Devon Streams	94	Normal	Notably low	Notably low	Normal
Teign And Torbay	71	Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Above normal

Hydrological area	Sep 2026 rainfall % of long term average 1991 to 2020	Sep 2026 band	Jul 2026 to September cumulative band	Apr 2026 to September cumulative band	Oct 2025 to September cumulative band
Torridge And Hartland Streams	92	Normal	Notably low	Below normal	Above normal
West Cornwall	89	Normal	Notably low	Below normal	Notably high

8.2 River flows table

Site name	River	Catchment	Sep 2026 band	Aug 2026 band
Austins Bridge	Dart	Dart	Below normal	Notably low
Bellever	East Dart	Dart	Below normal	Notably low
Bodmin Dunmere	Camel	Camel	Below normal	Notably low
Chudleigh Bridge	Teign	Teign Upper	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low
Dotton	Otter	Otter	Below normal	Notably low
Gunnislake	Tamar	Tamar Lower	Normal	Below normal
Gwills	Gannel	Gannel	Notably low	Exceptionally low
Restormel	Fowey	Fowey	Normal	Below normal
St Erth	Hayle	Hayle	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low
Thorverton	Exe	Exe Lower	Notably low	Notably low
Torrington	Torridge	Torridge Middle	Below normal	Exceptionally low
Truro	Kenwyn	Tresillian Trevella Kenwyn	Normal	Below normal
Umberleigh	Taw	Taw Middle	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low
Whitford	Axe	Axe Devon Middle	Below normal	Exceptionally low

8.3 Groundwater table

Site name	Aquifer	End of Sep 2026 band	End of Aug 2026 band
Branscombe Lane	Dawlish Sandstone	Above normal	Above normal
Bussels No7a	Dawlish Sandstone	Normal	Normal
Coleford Production	Permian Breccias And Sandstones	Below normal	Below normal
Whitlands	Upper Greensand	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high
Winnards Perch B.h.	Staddon Formation	Notably low	Notably low
Woodbury Common No2	Budleigh Salterton Pebble Beds	Normal	Normal
Woodleys No1	Otterton Sandstone Formation	Normal	Normal

8.4 Hydrological Areas