

Monthly water situation report: Wessex Area

1 Summary - September 2026

September was a relatively dry month with an average of 38mm rain falling across Wessex, 57% the Long Term Average (LTA). Rainfall was generally below normal across Wessex with only the Dorset Stour hydrological areas receiving normal rainfall. The previous 3 month period has been the second driest July to September on record (43% LTA). The previous 6 months have been the third driest April to September on record (59% LTA). Soil Moisture Deficit (SMD) for the Wessex region showed some early recovery but increased again by the end of the month to a historic maximum for this time of year. Daily mean flows across Wessex remained low throughout the month with little response to rainfall. The majority of sites across Wessex reported below normal to exceptionally low monthly mean flows with the River Tone and Bristol Frome at a historic low for September. Groundwater levels fell across much of Wessex during September. All sites were notably or exceptional low by the end of the month except Allington which was normal. Most sites on the Chalk Aquifer are reporting as notably low or exceptionally low. Wrington (Carboniferous Limestone) is also reporting exceptionally low at the end of the month. Reservoir storage has reduced with Wessex Water ending the month at 28% total storage capacity, significantly below 1976, 2022 and 2025. Bristol Water ended the month at 44% total storage capacity similar to 2025.

1.1 Rainfall

An average of 38mm of rain fell across Wessex in September (57% of the LTA). One third of the month's total rainfall was recorded on 7 September. Rainfall was generally below normal across Wessex except for the Upper and Middle Dorset Stour hydrological areas which received normal rainfall for September. The Upper Dorset Stour hydrological area received the highest monthly total of 49mm, equivalent to 74% of the LTA.

The previous 3 months saw exceptionally low rainfall across the Wessex region, being the second driest July to September on record. The previous 6 months saw exceptionally low rainfall in all areas except 2 in the north which were notably low. The last 12 months, however, show normal to above normal levels of rainfall with the south of the Wessex being wetter than the north. September marks the end of the water year which started with the sixth wettest October to March followed by the third driest April to September.

1.2 Soil moisture

SMD decreased sharply at the start of September in response to rainfall at the end of August and early September. This increased again towards the end of the month, exceeding the historic maximum. SMD at the end of the month is much higher than in 2025. Most hydrological areas in the south-east of Wessex recorded a SMD between 131-160mm at the

end of September, while most areas to the north and west recorded a SMD between 101-130mm. The east of Wessex was 51-75mm greater than the LTA.

1.3 River flows

Daily mean river flows remained low across Wessex throughout September in response to the relatively low rainfall. This is most noticeable on the monitoring sites on the Hampshire Avon and Dorset Stour that reported notably low to exceptionally low daily mean flows at the end of the month. Sites in quicker responding catchments in the north of Wessex showed temporary response to rainfall in early September but nothing sustained.

The majority of monitoring sites across Wessex reported below normal to exceptionally low monthly mean flows for September. Only the River Isle at Ashton Mill and River Asker at Bridport East Bridge in the west reported normal monthly mean flows. Almost all sites in chalk catchments reported notably low to exceptionally low monthly mean flows. In the north of Wessex both Bristol Frome at Frenchay and River Tone at Bishops Hull reported the lowest monthly mean flows on record for September. These were 20% and 45% LTA respectively.

1.4 Groundwater levels

Groundwater levels continued to fall across Wessex during September. Most monitoring site recorded notably or exceptionally low by the end of the month. Allington was the only site to report normal groundwater levels.

Didmarton experienced a marked decline during September, falling from normal levels at the end of August to notably low by the end of the month. Half the sites on the Wessex Basin Chalk were exceptionally low and have shown no response to the rainfall. Wrington (monitoring the Carboniferous Limestone) was also reporting exceptionally low.

1.5 Reservoir storage

Reservoir storage has continued to fall through September for both Bristol Water and Wessex Water due to the lack of rainfall. Wessex Water ended the month at approximately 28% total storage capacity, significantly below 1976, 1995 and 2025. Bristol Water was at 44% total storage capacity at the end of September and is tracking at a similar storage to 1995.

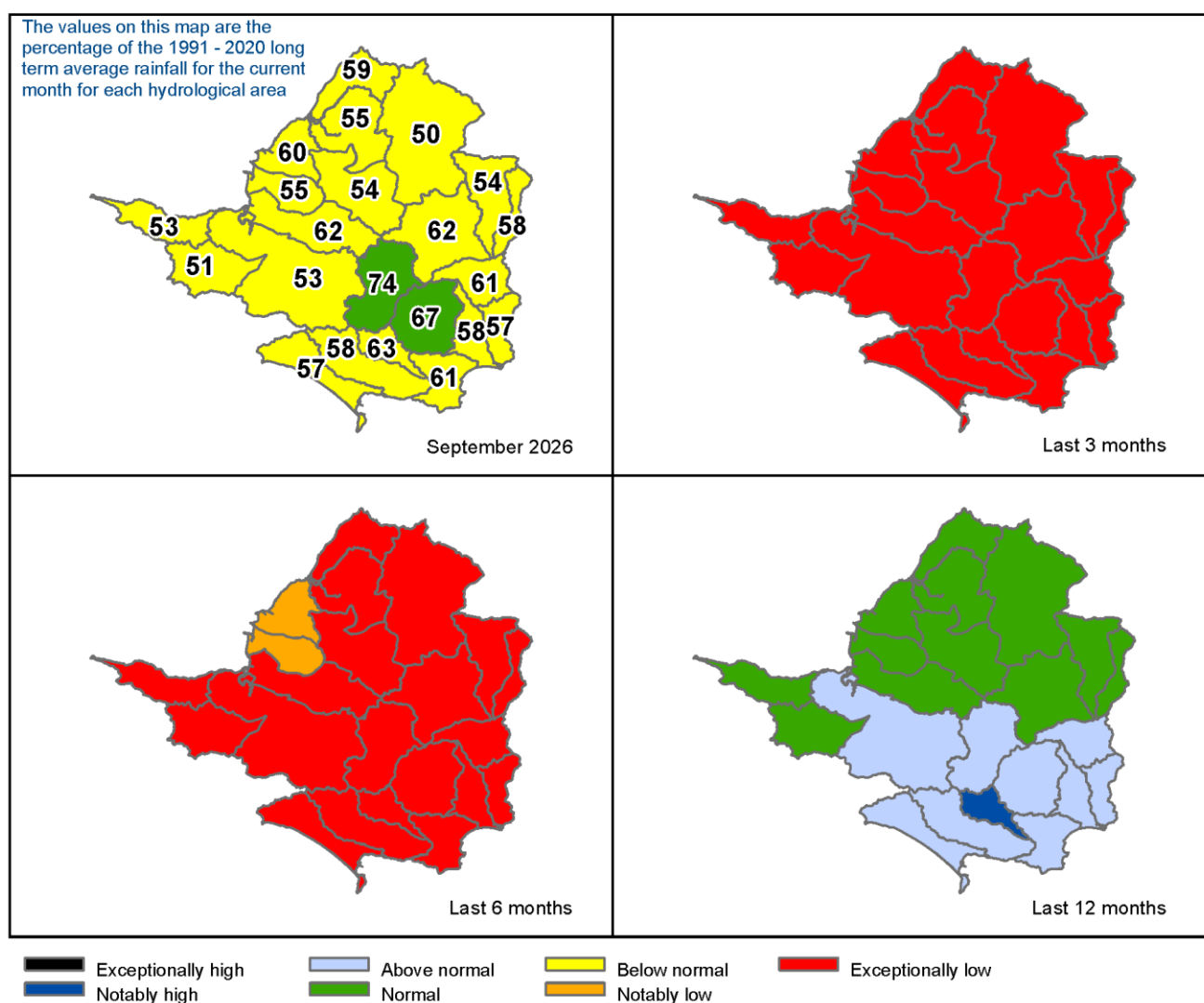
Author: Wessex Hydrology, hydrology.wessex@environment-agency.gov.uk

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2 Rainfall

2.1 Rainfall map

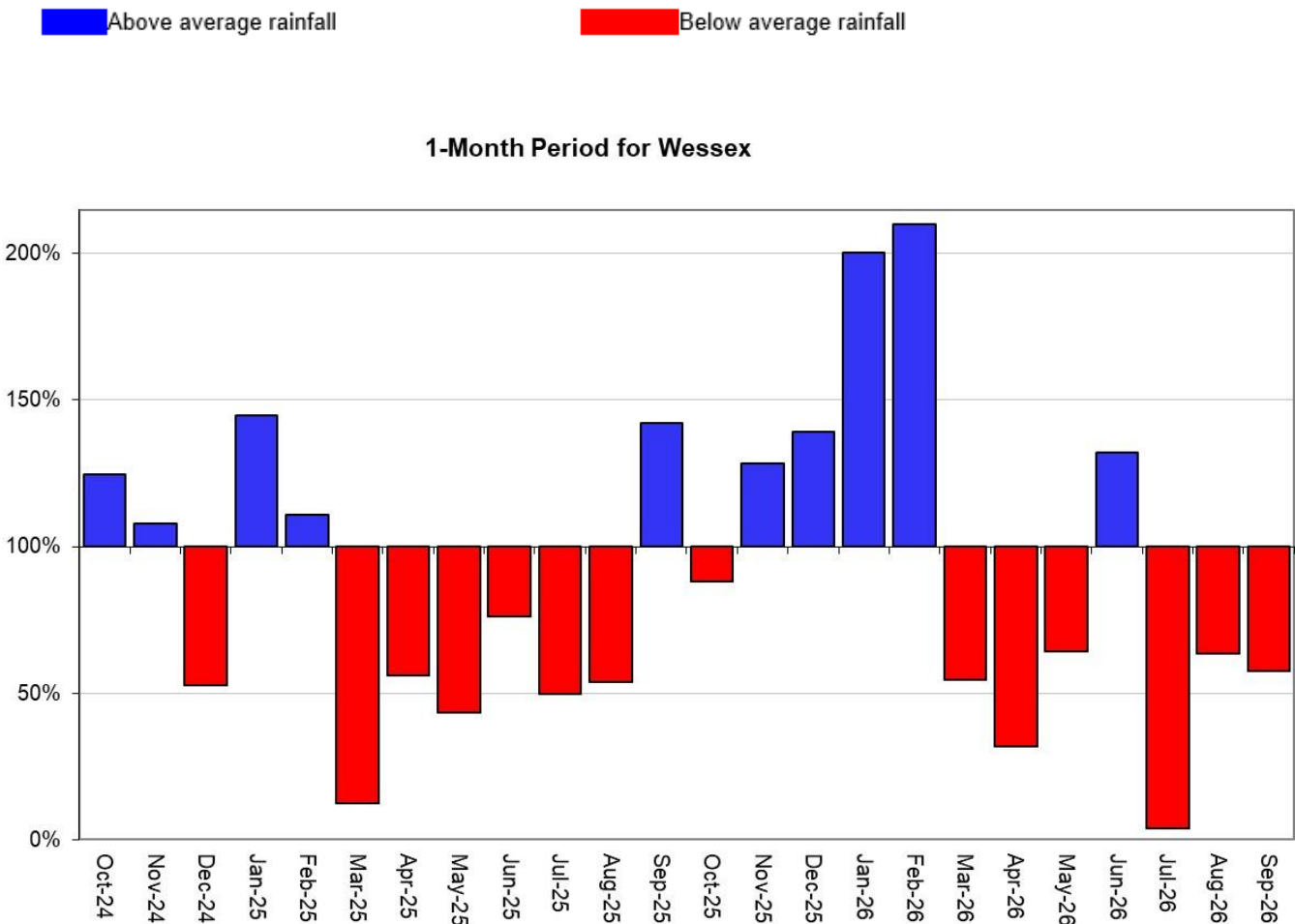
Figure 2.1: Total rainfall for hydrological areas for the current month (up to 30 September 2026), the last 3 months, the last 6 months, and the last 12 months, classed relative to an analysis of respective historic totals between 1991 and 2020. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.



Rainfall data for January 2025 onwards, extracted from Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges. (Source: Environment Agency. Crown Copyright, AC0000807064, 2026). Rainfall data prior to January 2025, extracted from Met Office HadUK 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from registered rain gauges (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026).

2.2 Rainfall charts

Figure 2.2: Monthly rainfall totals for the past 24 months as a percentage of the 1991 to 2020 long term average for each region and for England.

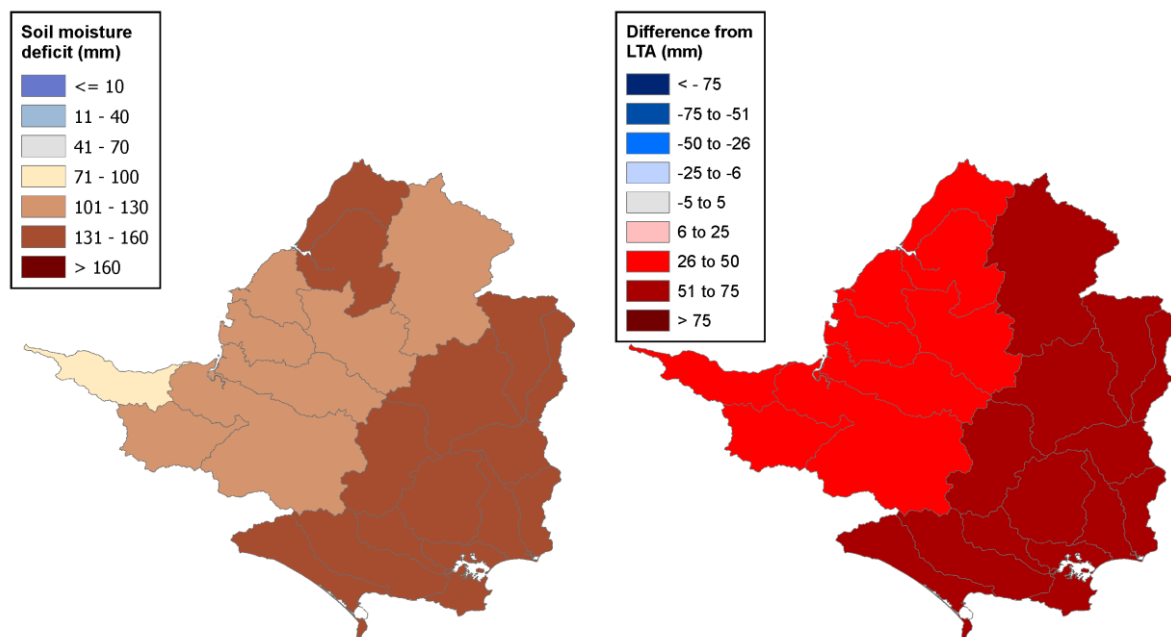


Rainfall data for January 2025 onwards, extracted from Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges. (Source: Environment Agency. Crown Copyright, 100024198, 2026). Rainfall data prior to January 2025, extracted from Met Office HadUK 1km gridded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

3 Soil moisture deficit

3.1 Soil moisture deficit map

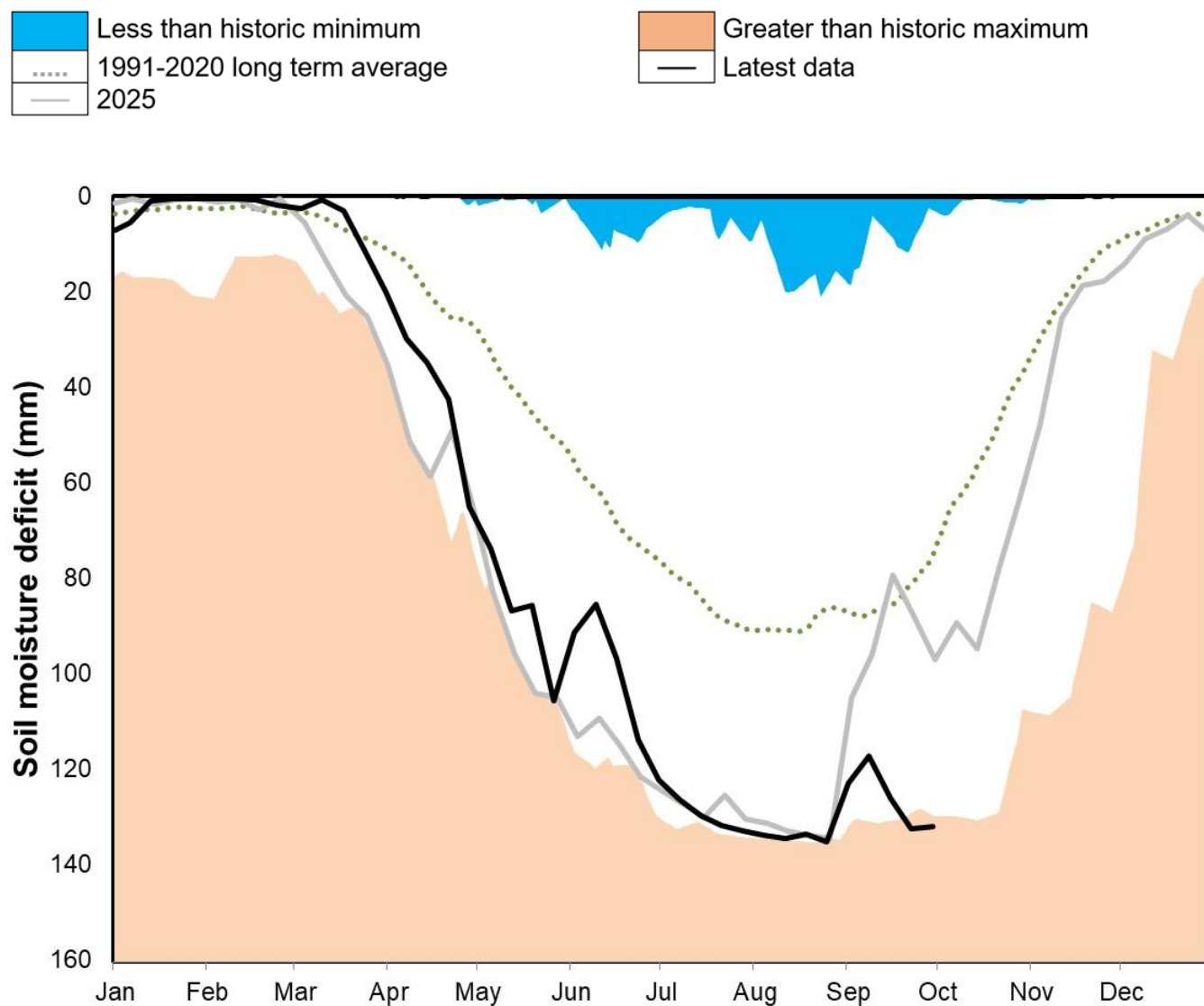
Figure 3.1: Soil moisture deficits for weeks ending 30 September 2026. Shows the difference (mm) of the actual soil moisture deficit from the 1991 to 2020 long term average soil moisture deficits. MORECS data for real land use.



(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

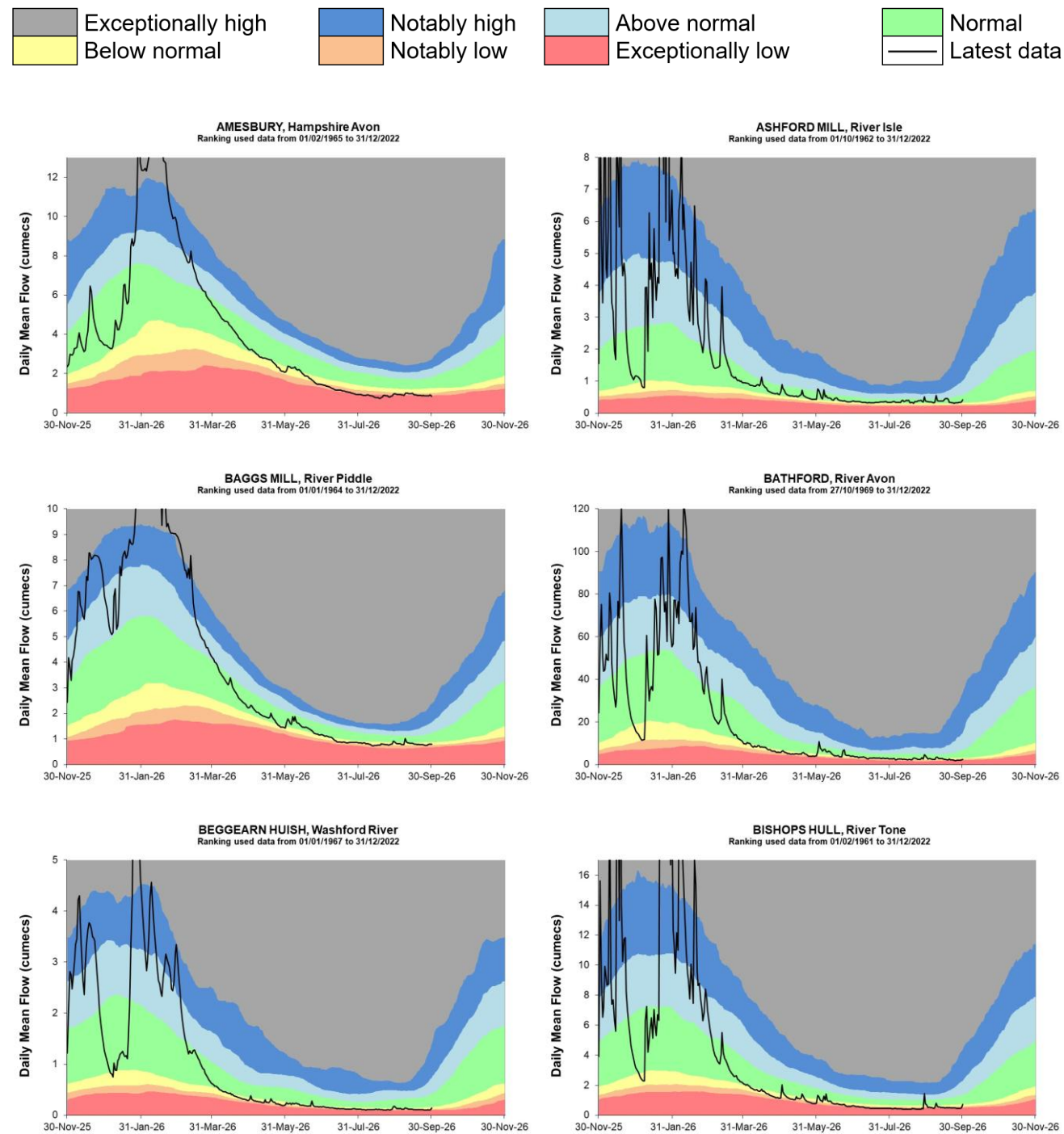
Figure 4.1: Monthly mean river flow for indicator sites for September 2026, expressed as a percentage of the respective long term average and classed relative to an analysis of historic September monthly means Table available in the appendices with detailed information.



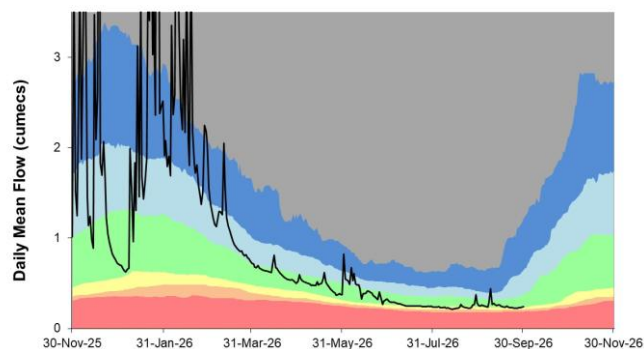
(Source: Environment Agency). Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, AC0000807064, 2026. Flow data at Knapp Mill on the Hampshire Avon is omitted due to data issues.

4.2 River flow charts

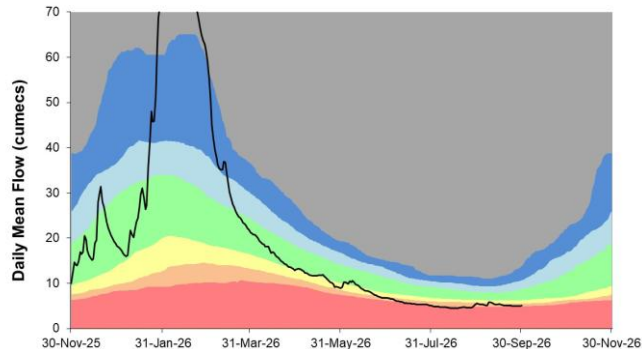
Figure 4.2: Daily mean river flow for index sites over the past year, compared to an analysis of historic daily mean flows.



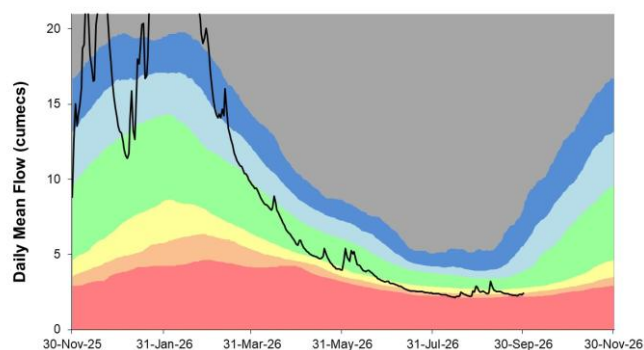
BRIDPORTEAST BRIDGE, River Asker
Ranking used data from 01/03/1996 to 31/12/2022



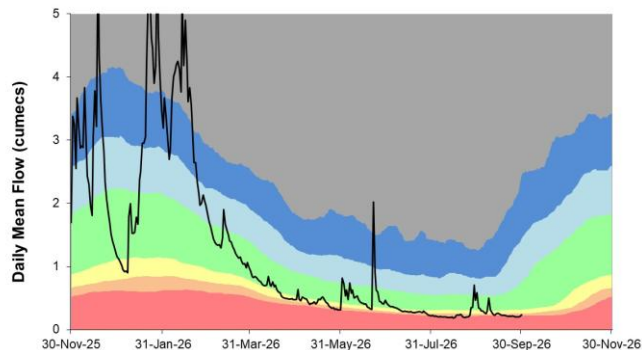
EAST MILLS COMBINED, Hampshire Avon
Ranking used data from 01/11/1965 to 31/12/2022



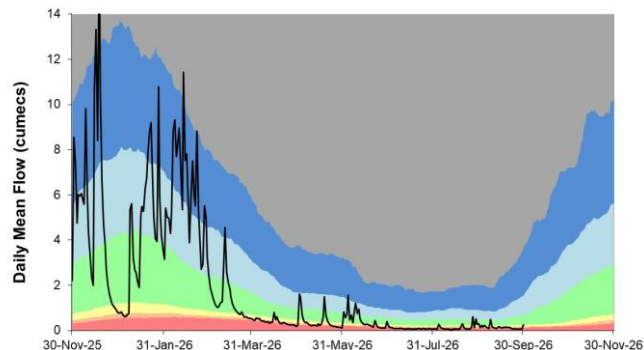
EAST STOKE COMBINED, Dorset Frome
Ranking used data from 01/10/1965 to 31/12/2022



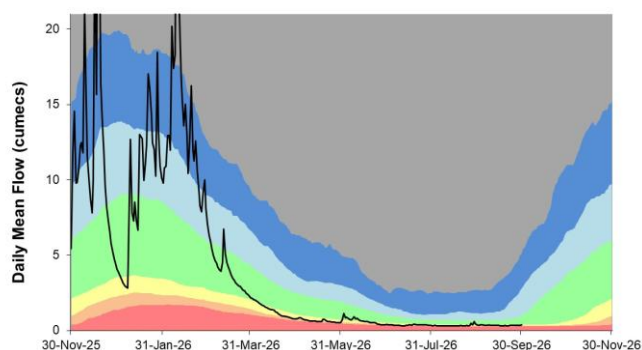
FENNY CASTLE, River Sheppey
Ranking used data from 01/01/1964 to 31/12/2022



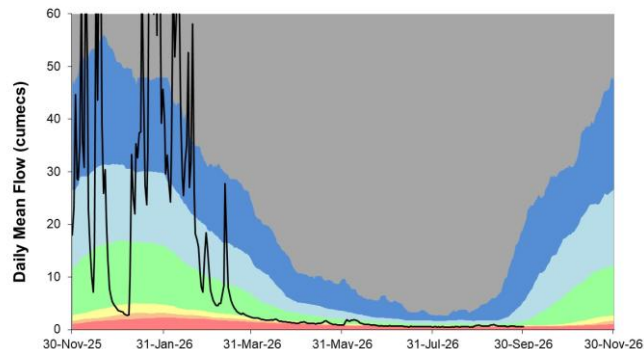
FRENCHAY, Bristol Frome
Ranking used data from 01/09/1961 to 31/12/2022



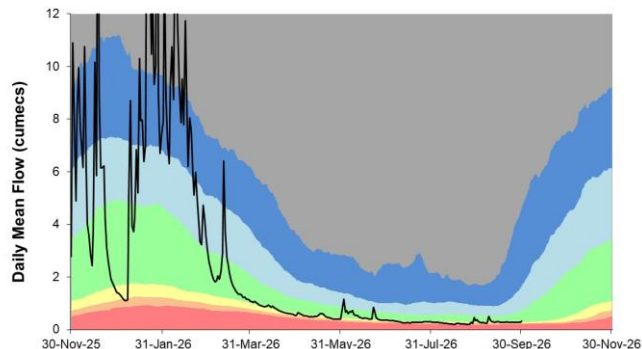
GREAT SOMERFORD, River Avon
Ranking used data from 16/12/1963 to 31/12/2022

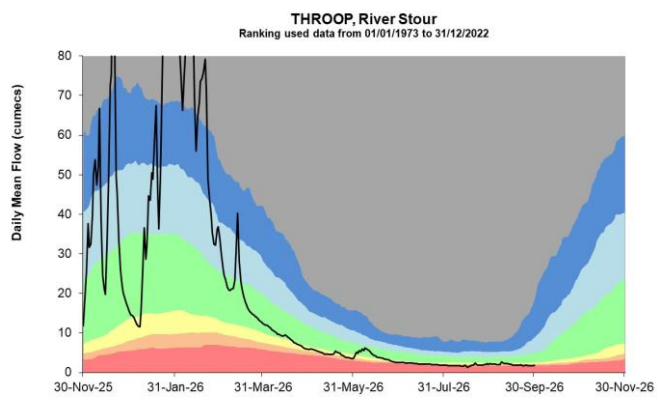
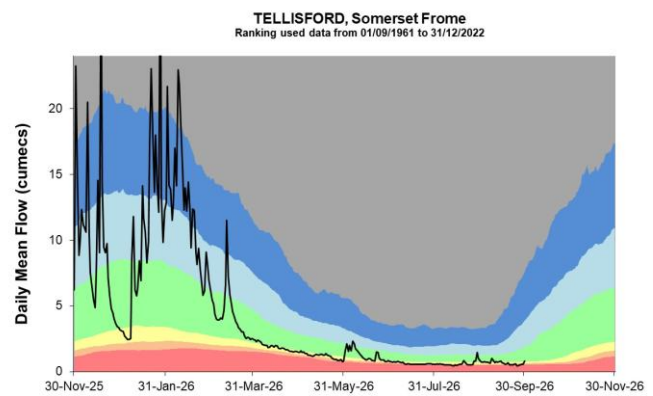
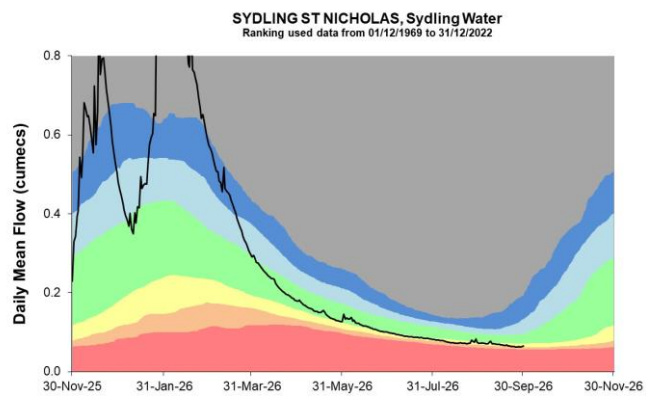
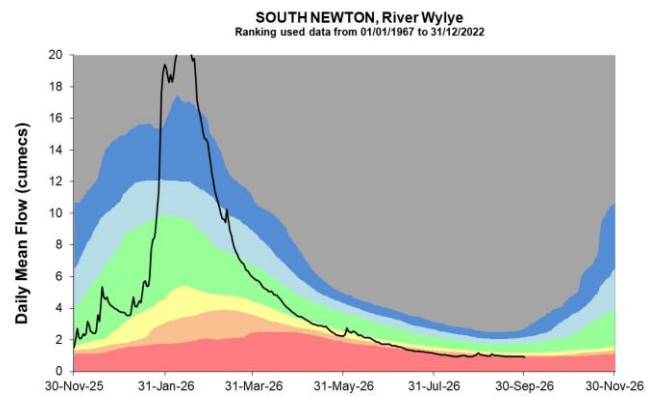
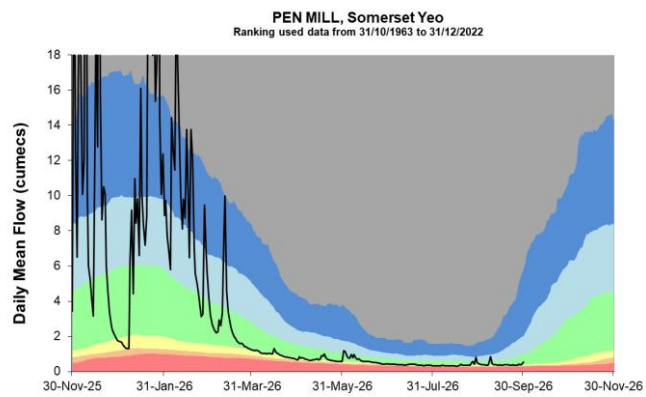


HAMMOON, River Stour
Ranking used data from 01/03/1968 to 31/12/2022



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



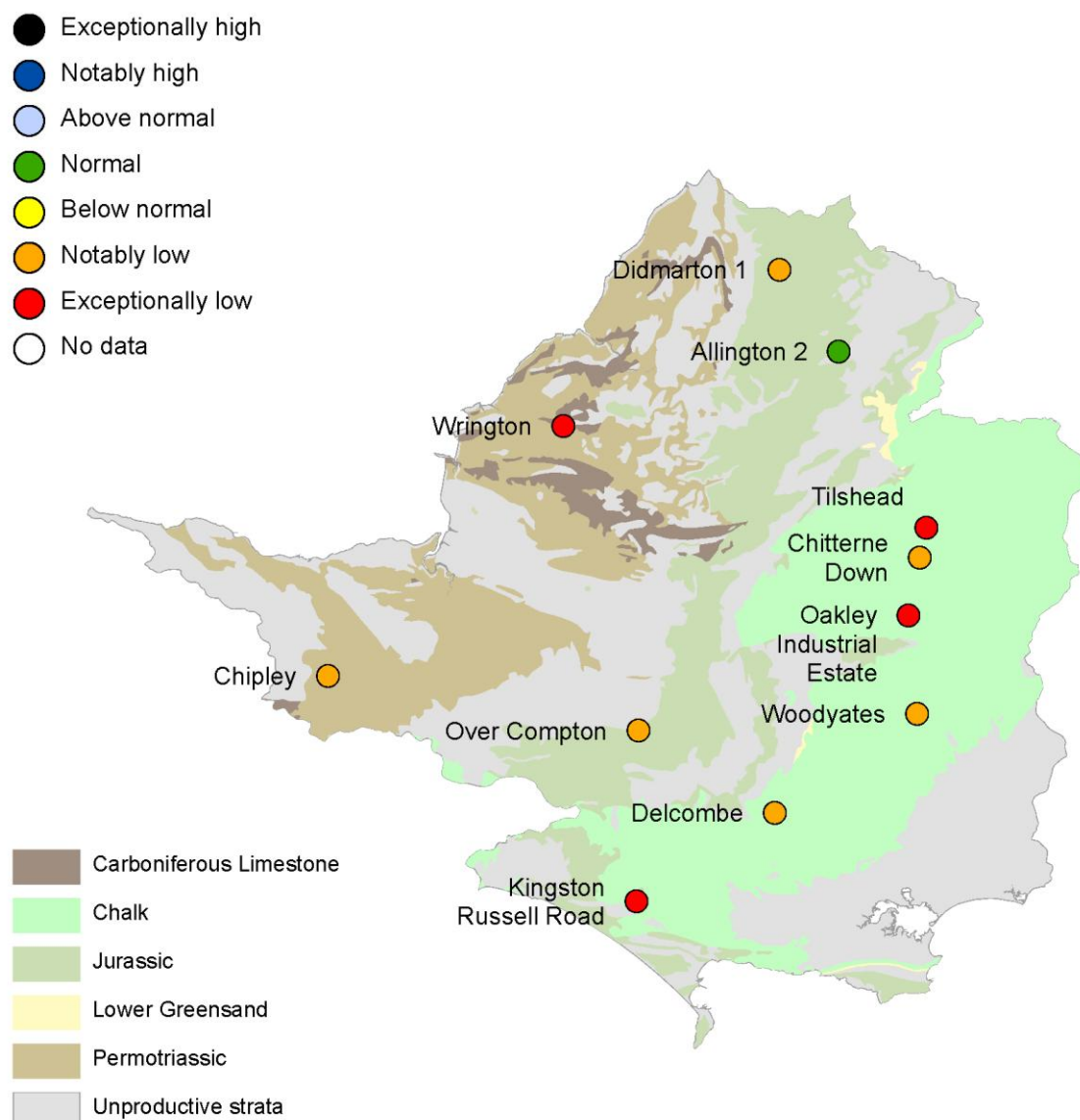


Source: Environment Agency, 2026.

5 Groundwater levels

5.1 Groundwater levels map

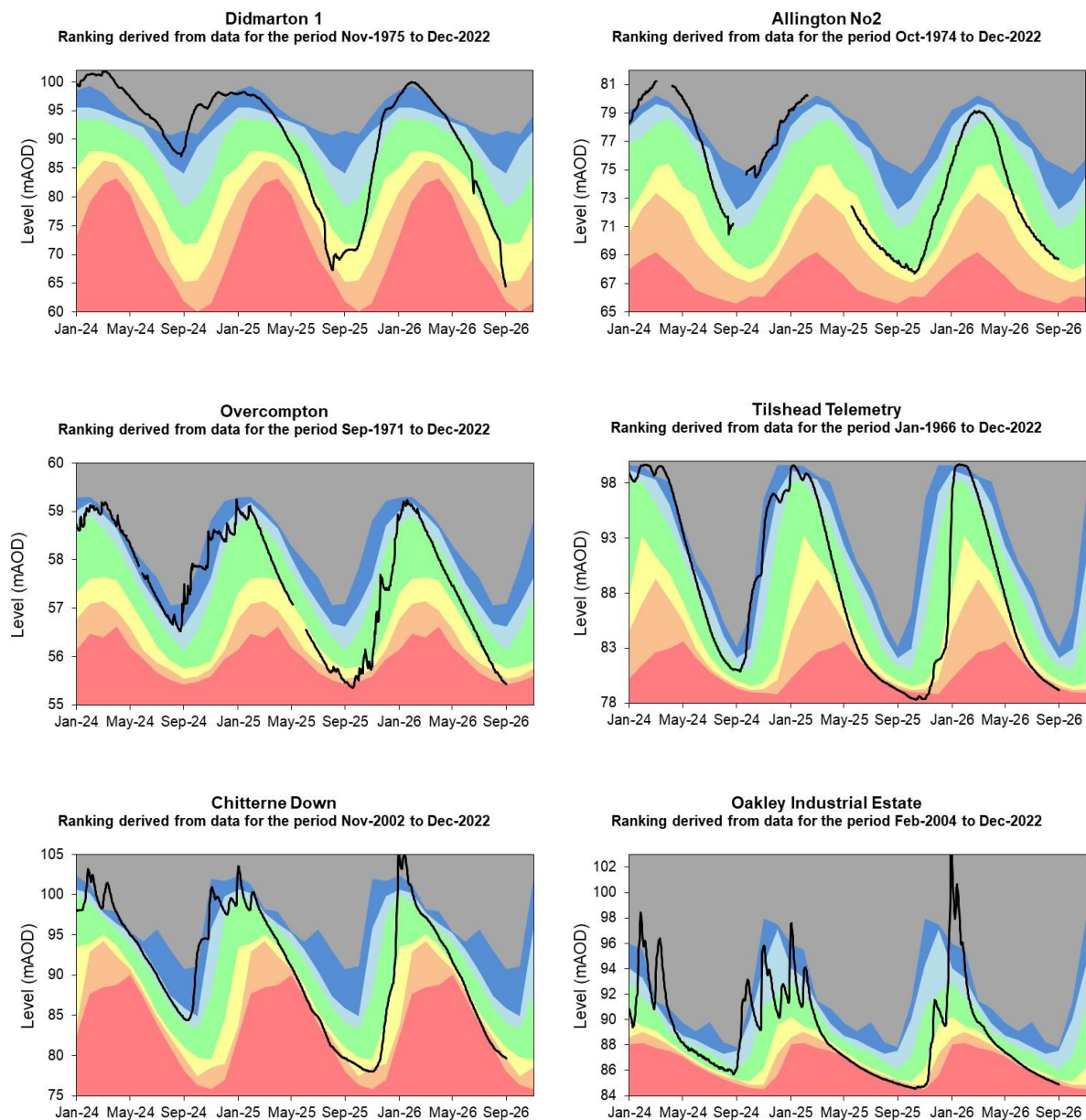
Figure 5.1: Groundwater levels for indicator sites at the end of September 2026, classed relative to an analysis of respective historic end of September levels. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.

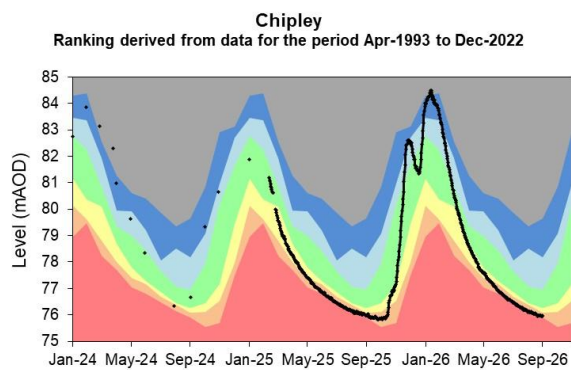
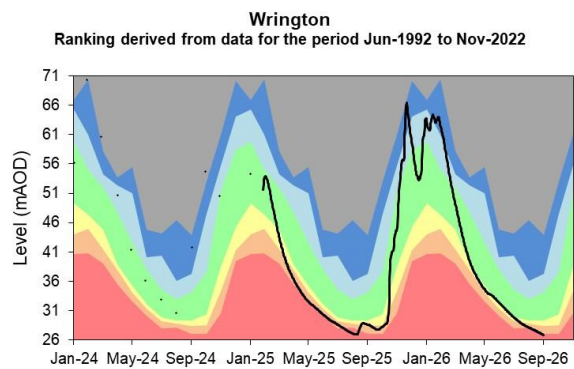
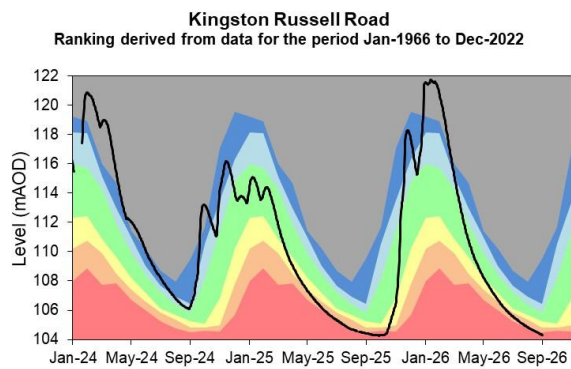
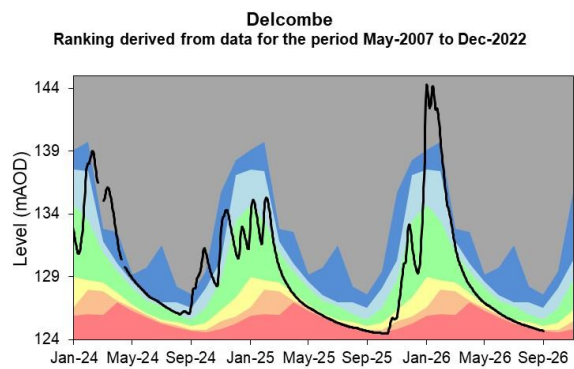
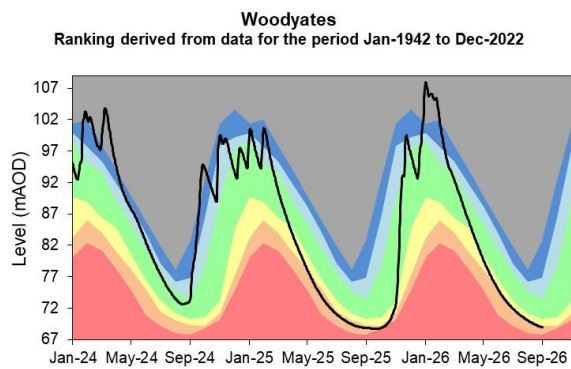


(Source: Environment Agency). Geological map reproduced with kind permission from UK Groundwater Forum, BGS copyright NERC. Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, AC0000807064, 2026.

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.

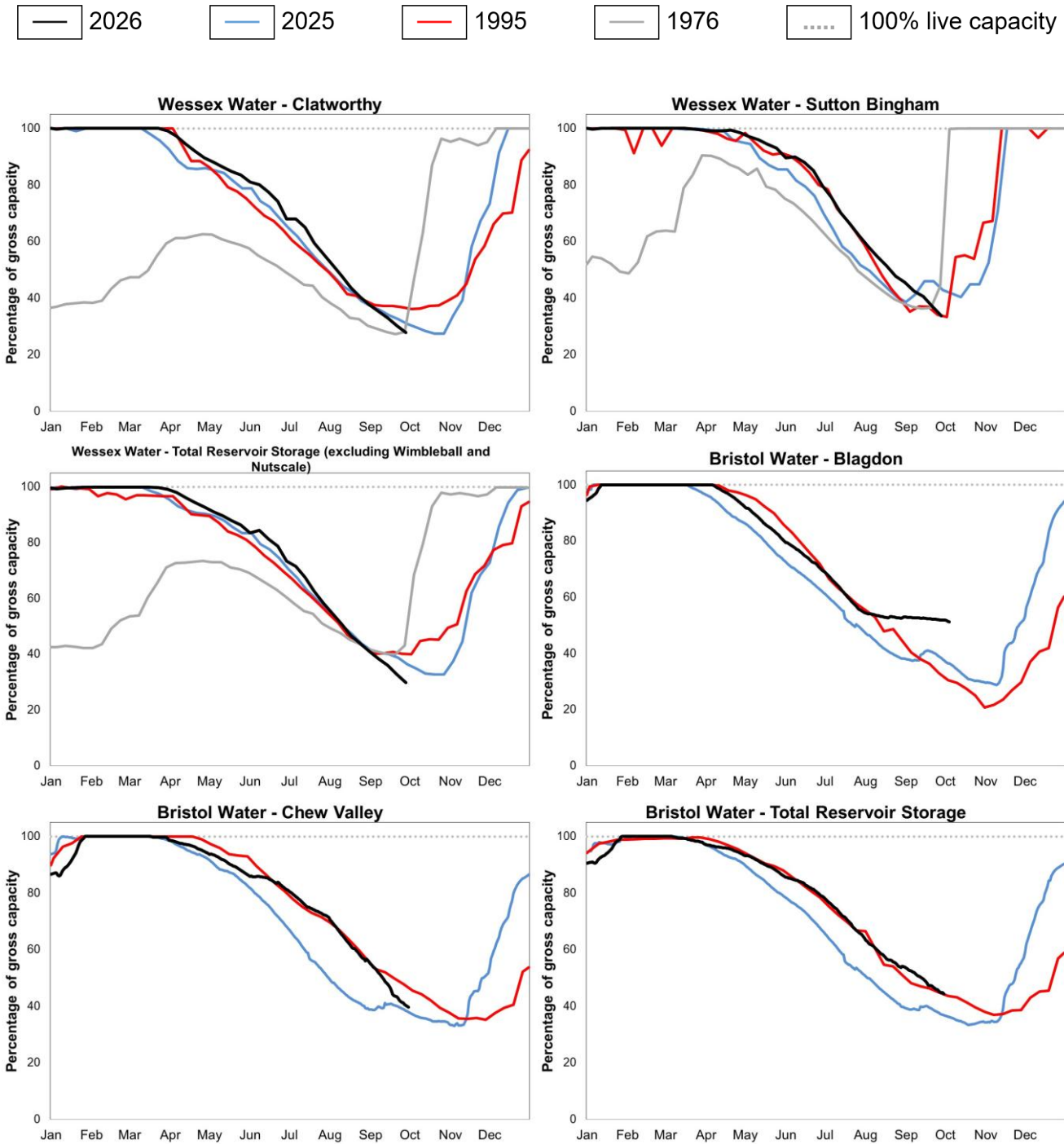




Source: Environment Agency, 2026.

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 September

Area	Number of fluvial flood alerts in September	Number of coastal flood alerts in September	Number of groundwater flood alerts in September
North Wessex	0	4	0
South Wessex	0	3	0

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

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

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

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

8 Stream support

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

Catchment	River	Stream support site	Environment Agency Gauging station	End of September 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	Tucking Mill (Wessex Water)	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	No abstraction taking place

Catchment	River	Stream support site	Environment Agency Gauging station	End of September status
Dorset Frome	Watergates Stream	Watergates	Watergates (Wessex Water)	Off
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
Hampshire Avon	Bourne	Porton	Salisbury Bourne	On
Hampshire Avon	Chitterne Brook	Codford Road	Codford	Off
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 September

Catchment	Number of licences at restrict at the end of September	Number of licences at cease at the end of September
Bristol Avon	1	2
Dorset	3	5
Hampshire Avon	5	7
Somerset	7	17

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

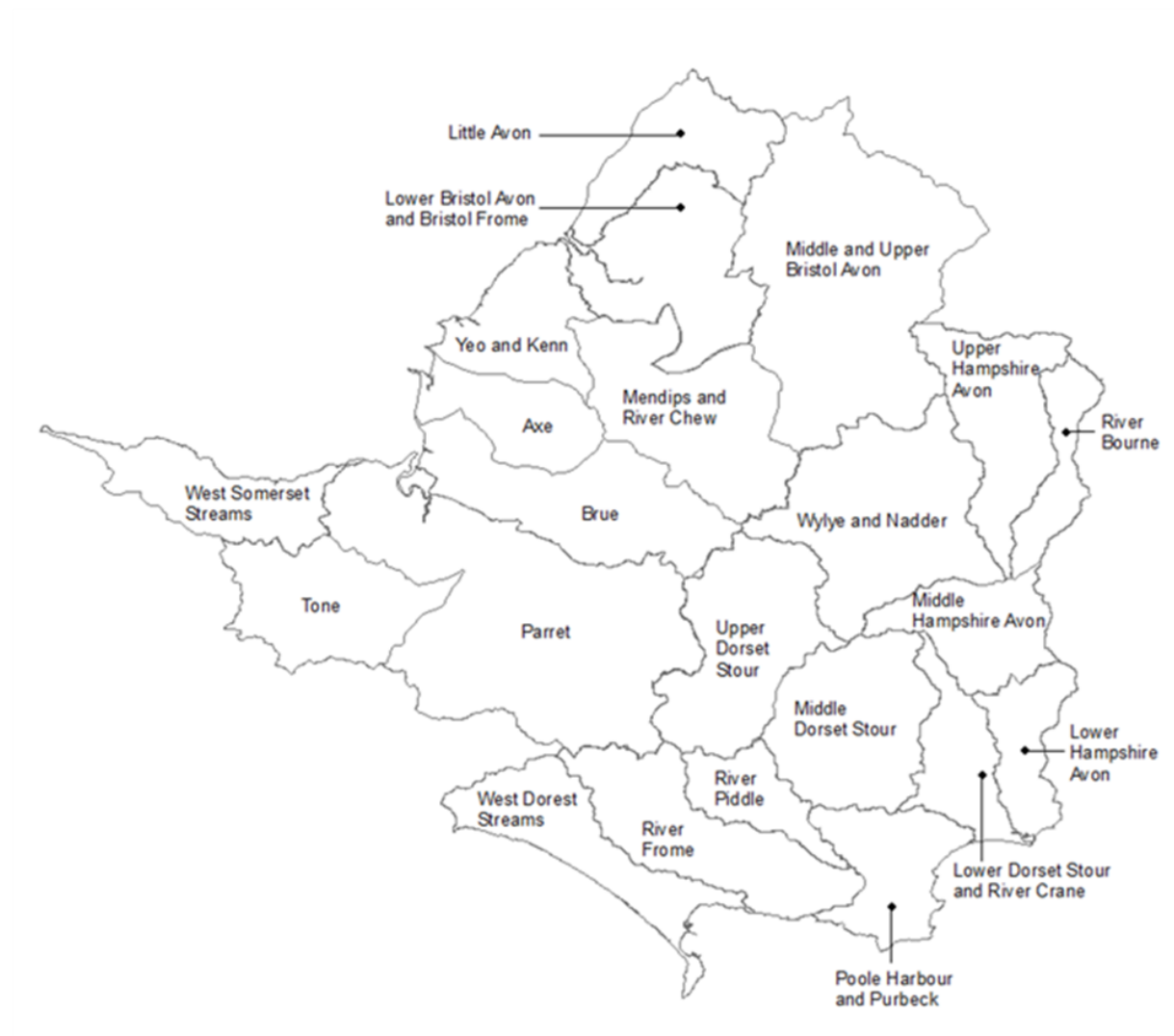
Value likely to fall within this band 8% of the time.

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	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
Axe	55	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Notably low	Normal
Brue	62	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Normal
Little Avon	59	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Normal
Lower Bristol Avon And Bristol Frome	55	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Normal
Lower Dorset Stour And River Crane	58	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Above normal
Lower Hampshire Avon	57	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Above normal
Mendips And River Chew	54	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Normal
Middle And Upper Bristol Avon	50	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	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
Middle Dorset Stour	67	Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Above normal
Middle Hampshire Avon	61	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Above normal
Parrett	53	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Above normal
Poole Harbour And Purbeck	61	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Above normal
River Bourne	58	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Normal
River Frome	58	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Above normal
River Piddle	63	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Notably high
Tone	51	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Normal
Upper Dorset Stour	74	Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Above normal
Upper Hampshire Avon	54	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	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
West Dorset Streams	57	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Above normal
West Somerset Streams	53	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Normal
Wylfe And Nadder	62	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Normal
Yeo And Kenn	60	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Notably low	Normal

11.2 River flows table

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

Site name	River	Catchment	Sep 2026 band	Aug 2026 band
Hammoon	Dorset Stour	Dorset Stour	Notably low	Exceptionally low
Knapp Mill	Hampshire Avon	Hampshire Avon	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low
Lovington	Brue	Brue	Below normal	Notably low
Pen Mill	Somerset Yeo	Parrett	Below normal	Below normal
South Newton	Wylfe	Hampshire Avon	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally 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	Exceptionally low	Notably low

11.3 Groundwater table

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

