Monthly water situation report: Wessex Area

1 Summary - October 2026

October was wetter than recent months, with an average of 125mm of rain falling across Wessex, 126% of the Long Term Average (LTA). Most rainfall occurred during a prolonged wet period between 18 and 26 October, which accounted for 79% of the monthly total. Rainfall returned to normal and above normal levels across the region, with the north and east generally reporting above normal rainfall. Despite this improvement, the previous six months remained below normal to notably low across much of Wessex, although the previous 12 months remained generally above normal.

Soil Moisture Deficit (SMD) decreased significantly during October in response to sustained rainfall and finished the month close to the LTA across most of the area. Monthly mean river flows recovered in response to the rainfall, with most monitoring sites reporting normal monthly mean flows in October. Groundwater levels continued to fall but remained below normal at all monitoring sites, with five sites recording exceptionally low levels. Reservoir storage increased slightly during October, with Wessex Water ended the month at approximately 26% capacity, below storage levels in 1976, 1995 and 2025 levels. Bristol Water ended the month at 44% capacity, above 1976, 1995 and 2025.

1.1 Rainfall

An average of 125mm of rain fell across Wessex in October, equivalent to 126% of the LTA. The majority of rainfall occurred following Storms Austen and Boelo between 18 and 26 October, which accounted for 79% of the month's total rainfall. The Parrett had the least rainfall in October with 99mm, 104% LTA.

Rainfall was reported as normal and above normal levels across Wessex during October. Hydrological areas in the north and east generally received above normal rainfall, while those in the west and south-west recorded normal rainfall. Rainfall has been normal over the previous 3 months for most areas, with 3 areas in the west and 2 in the north reporting below normal. This period does not include the exceptionally dry rainfall of July. Over the previous six months, rainfall was reported as mostly below normal across Wessex with western hydrological areas reporting as notably low. However, rainfall over the last 12 months was generally above normal, with several southern hydrological areas recording notably high rainfall totals.

1.2 Soil moisture

SMD started October above the historic maximum level but decreased significantly during the month in response to sustained rainfall, moving closer to the LTA. SMD increased slightly

towards the end of the month but was significantly lower than the start of October and was close to 2025 levels.

By month end, SMD was 41 to 70mm in all Wessex hydrological areas except West Somerset Streams, which was 11 to 40mm. All areas were 6 to 25mm above the LTA.

1.3 River flows

Daily mean river flows temporarily peaked across much of Wessex in response to the rainfall before declining to normal or below levels by the end of the month. The most notable responses were observed in the River Brue at Lovington, which reached notably high, and the River Sheppey at Fenny Castle, which rose to exceptionally high before returning to the normal range by month end.

Nearly all sites in chalk catchments recorded below normal or notably low monthly mean flows. The majority of sites in less-permeable catchments were normal, with exception of the Bristol Avon at Great Somerford and the Tone at Bishops Hull which recorded below normal. The Bristol Frome at Frenchay returned to normal flow conditions following notably low flows in previous months

1.4 Groundwater levels

No groundwater monitoring sites recording normal or above. Five sites recorded exceptionally low groundwater levels by the end of the month, located in the south and east of the region. Four of these sites monitor the Wessex Basin Chalk aquifer. Groundwater levels in the north and west of Wessex were generally notably low.

1.5 Reservoir storage

Reservoir storage changed very little during October and ended the month at relatively low levels across all reservoirs. Wessex Water ended the month at approximately 26% total storage capacity, remaining below 1976, 1995 and 2025 levels. Bristol Water ended the month at approximately 44% total storage capacity and was above storage levels recorded in 1976, 1995 and 2025.

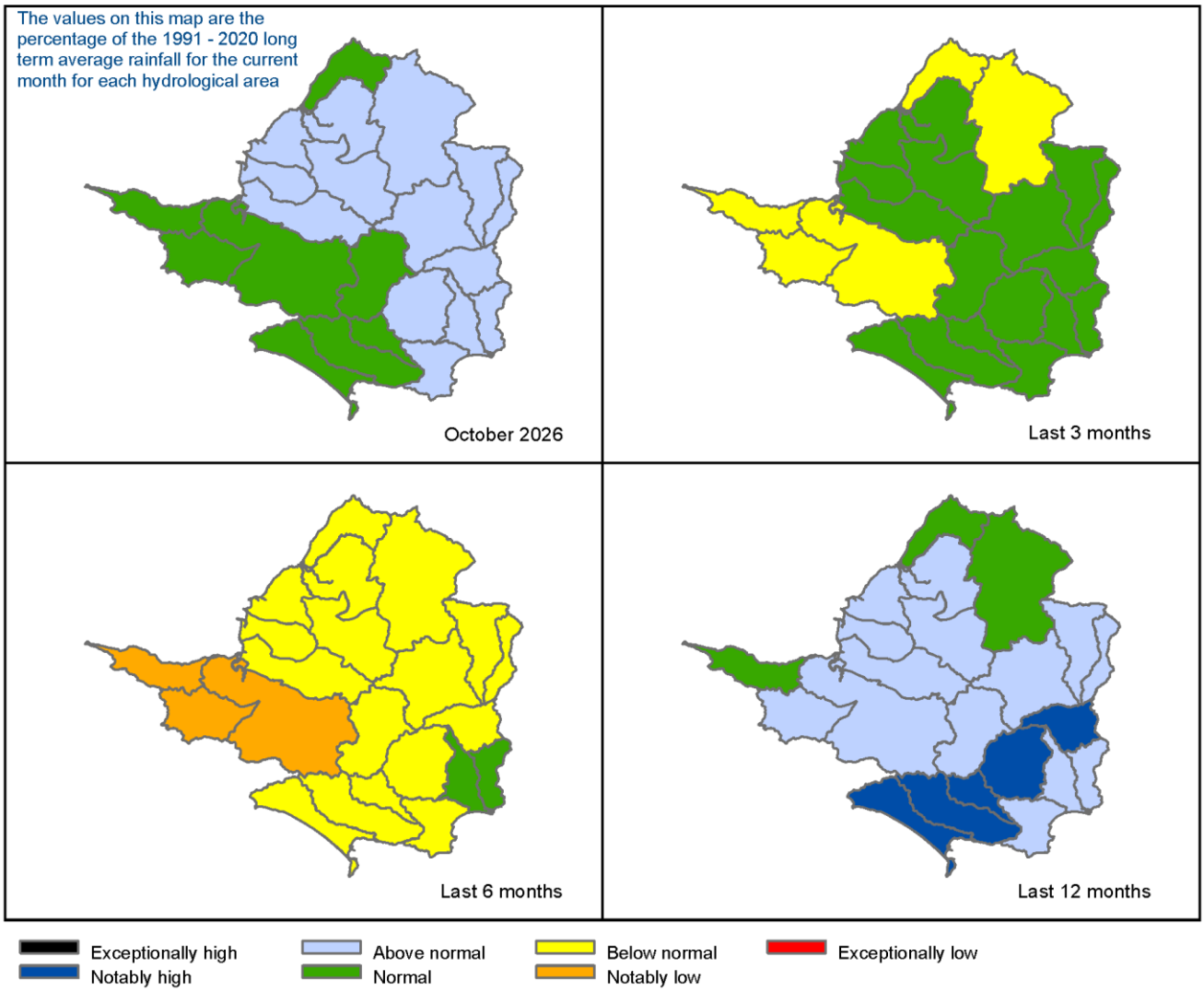
Author: Wessex Hydrology, hydrology.wessex@environment-agency.gov.uk

All data are provisional and may be subject to revision. The views expressed in this document are not necessarily those of the Environment Agency. Its officers, servants or agents accept no liability for any loss or damage arising from the interpretation or use of the information, or reliance upon views contained in this report.

2 Rainfall

2.1 Rainfall map

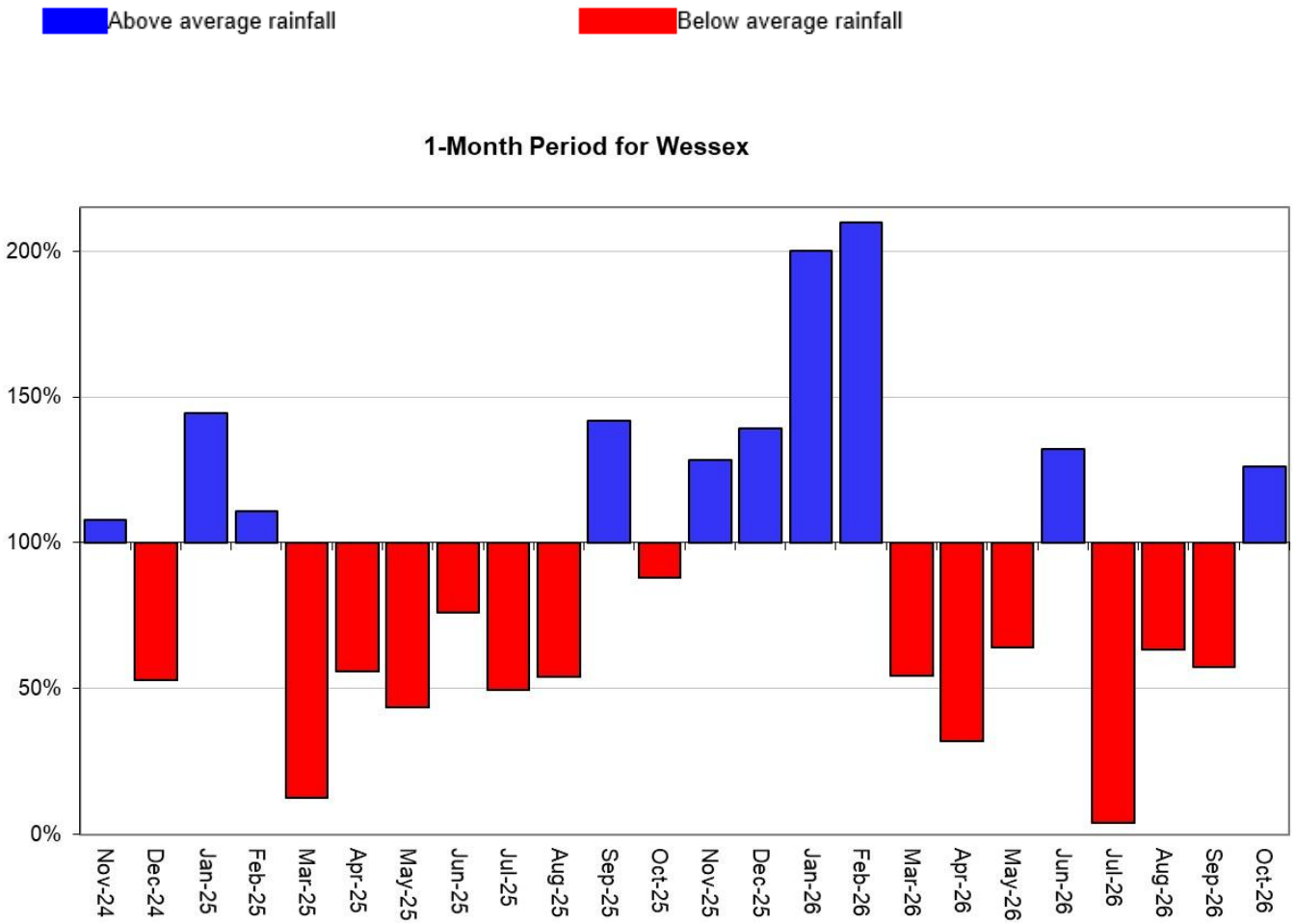
Figure 2.1: Total rainfall for hydrological areas for the current month (up to 31 October 2026), the last 3 months, the last 6 months, and the last 12 months, classed relative to an analysis of respective historic totals between 1991 and 2020. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.



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.

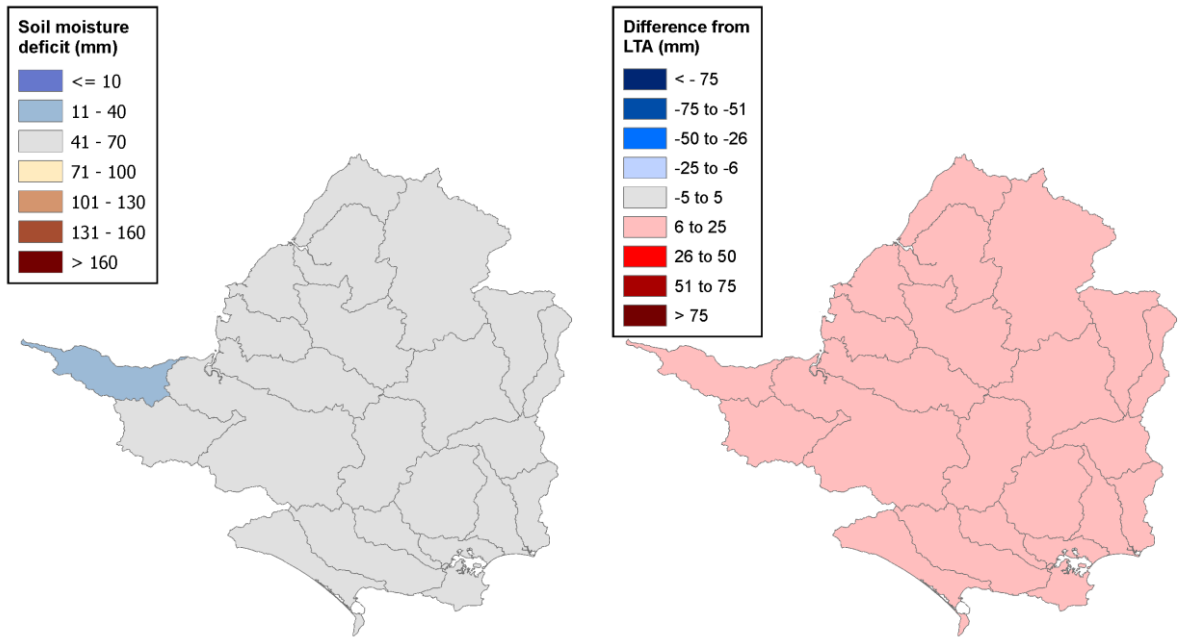


Rainfall data for January 2025 onwards, extracted from Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges. (Source: Environment Agency. Crown Copyright, 100024198, 2026). Rainfall data prior to January 2025, extracted from Met Office HadUK 1km gridded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

3 Soil moisture deficit

3.1 Soil moisture deficit map

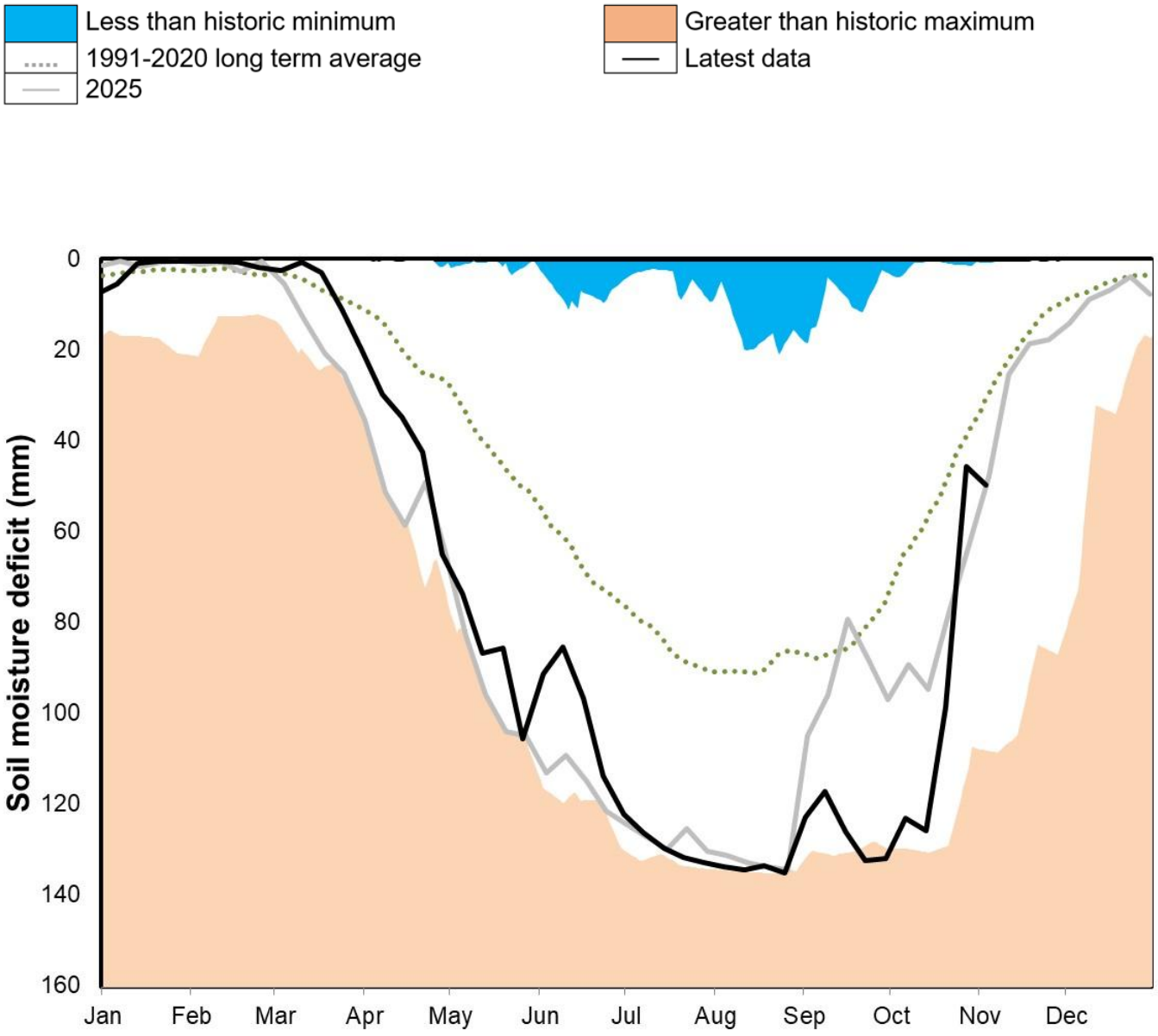
Figure 3.1: Soil moisture deficits for weeks ending 31 October 2026. Shows the difference (mm) of the actual soil moisture deficit from the 1991 to 2020 long term average soil moisture deficits. MORECS data for real land use.



(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.

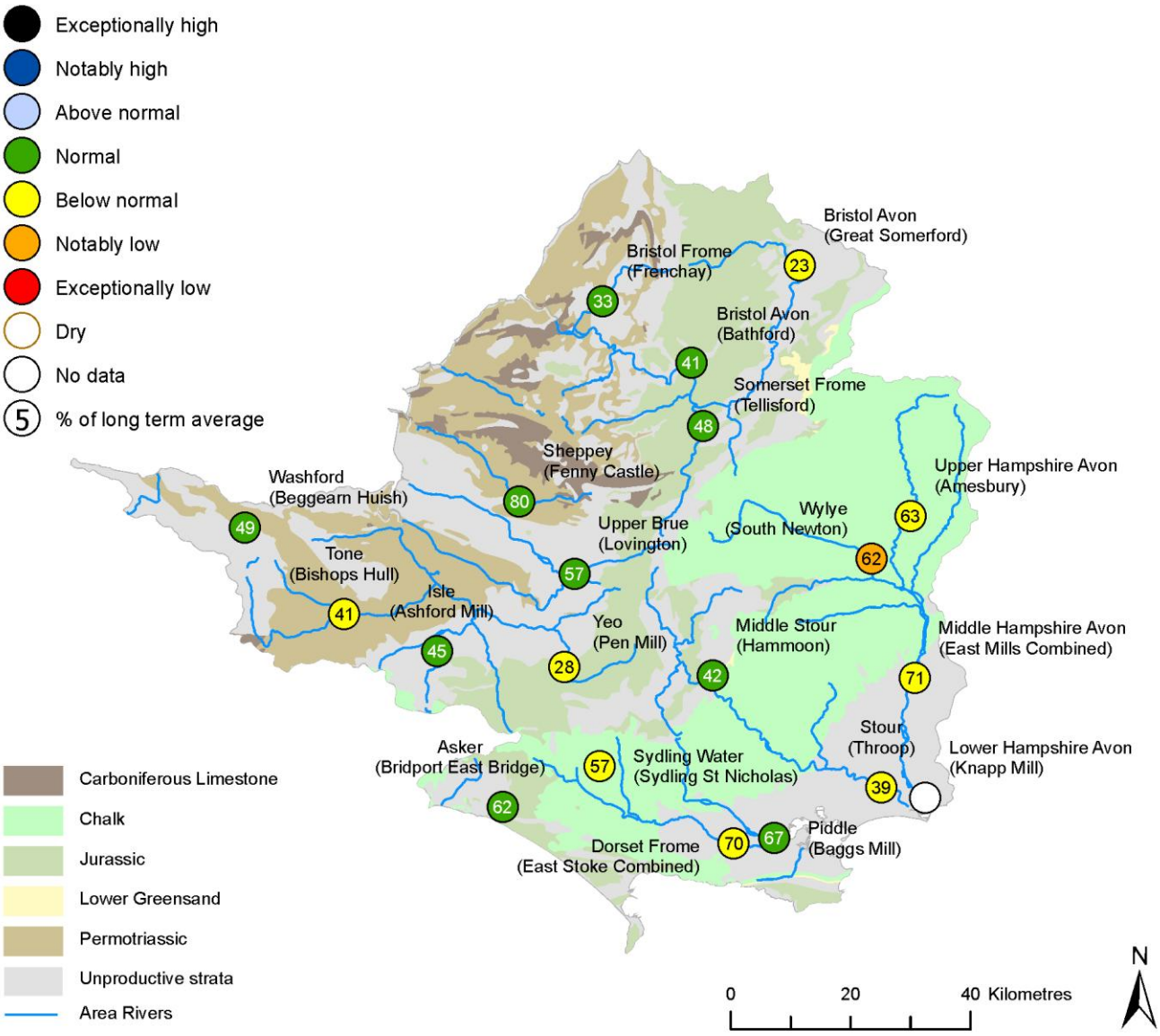


(Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026). All rights reserved. Environment Agency, 100024198, 2026

4 River flows

4.1 River flows map

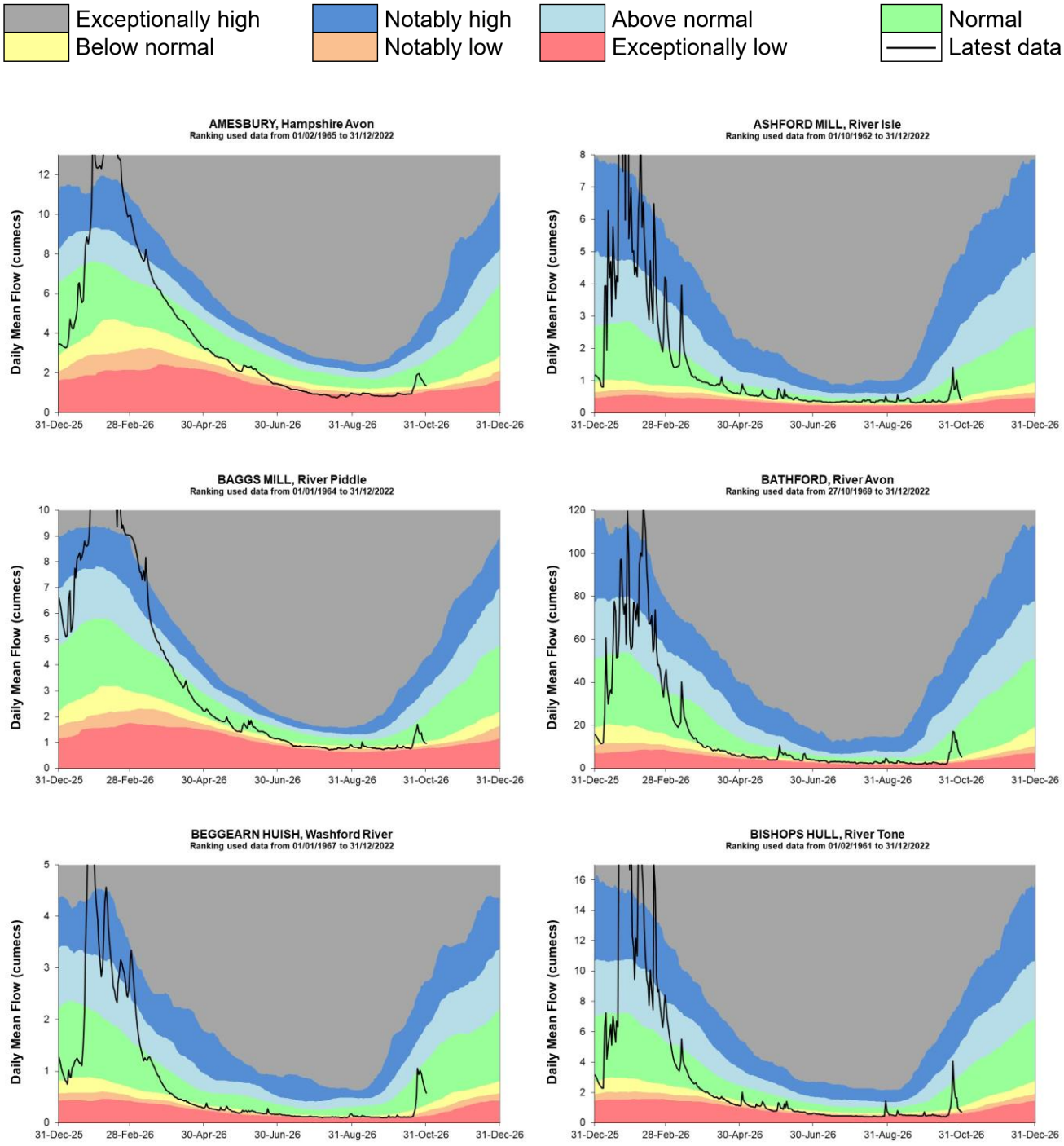
Figure 4.1: Monthly mean river flow for indicator sites for October 2026, expressed as a percentage of the respective long term average and classed relative to an analysis of historic October monthly means Table available in the appendices with detailed information.



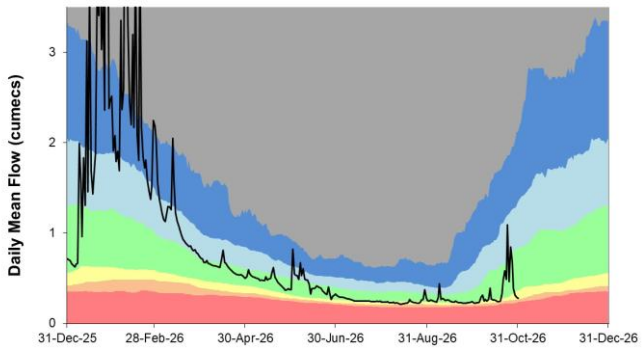
(Source: Environment Agency). Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, AC0000807064, 2026.

4.2 River flow charts

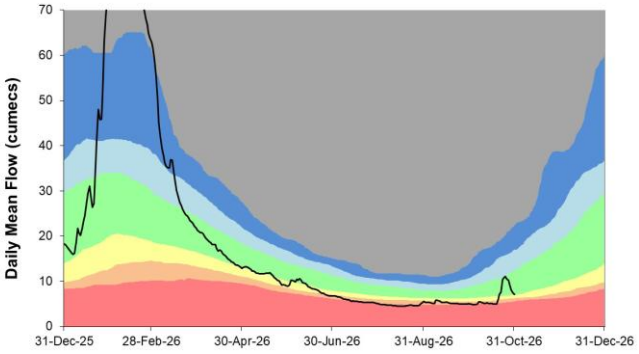
Figure 4.2: Daily mean river flow for index sites over the past year, compared to an analysis of historic daily mean flows.



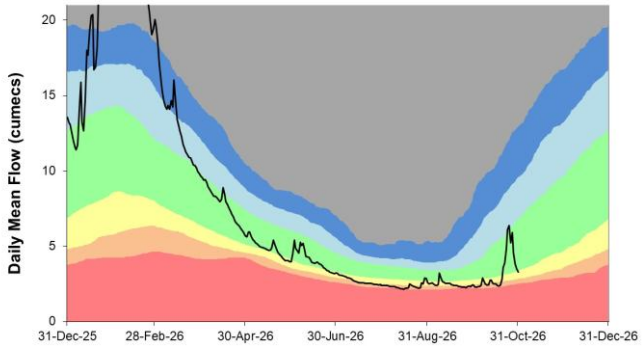
BRIDPORT EAST BRIDGE, River Asker
Ranking used data from 01/03/1996 to 31/12/2022



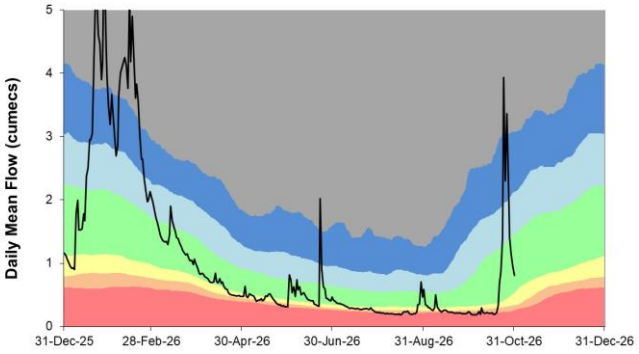
EAST MILLS COMBINED, Hampshire Avon
Ranking used data from 01/11/1965 to 31/12/2022



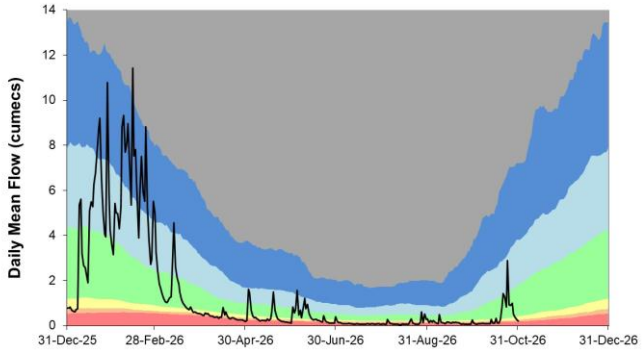
EAST STOKE COMBINED, Dorset Frome
Ranking used data from 01/10/1965 to 31/12/2022



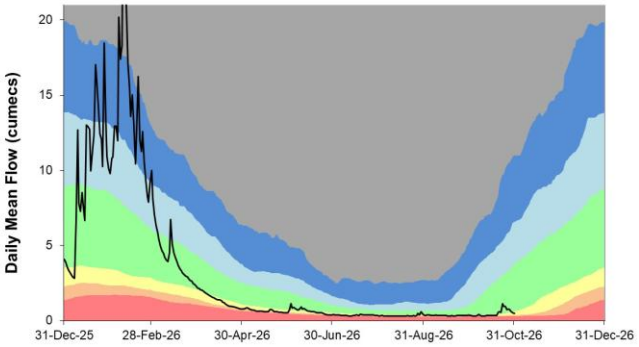
FENNY CASTLE , River Sheppey
Ranking used data from 01/01/1964 to 31/12/2022



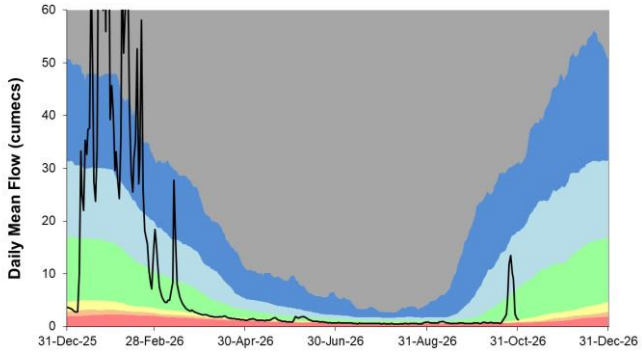
FRENCHAY, Bristol Frome
Ranking used data from 01/09/1961 to 31/12/2022



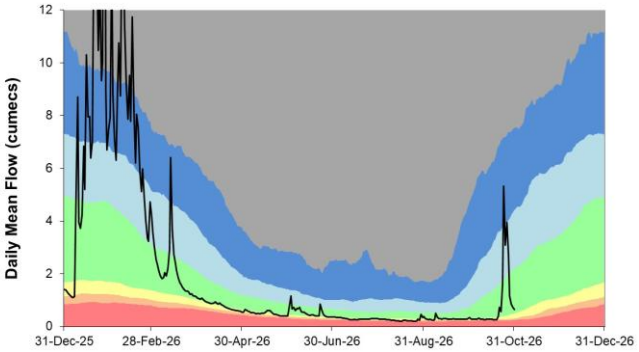
GREAT SOMERFORD, River Avon
Ranking used data from 16/12/1963 to 31/12/2022

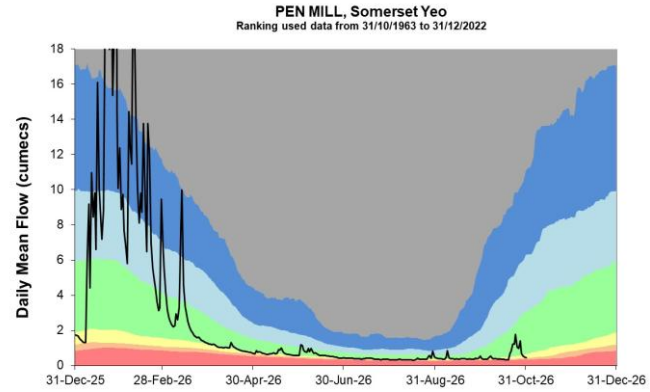


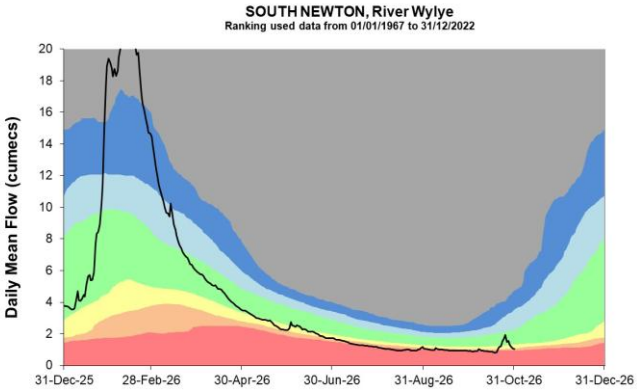
HAMMOON, River Stour
Ranking used data from 01/03/1968 to 31/12/2022

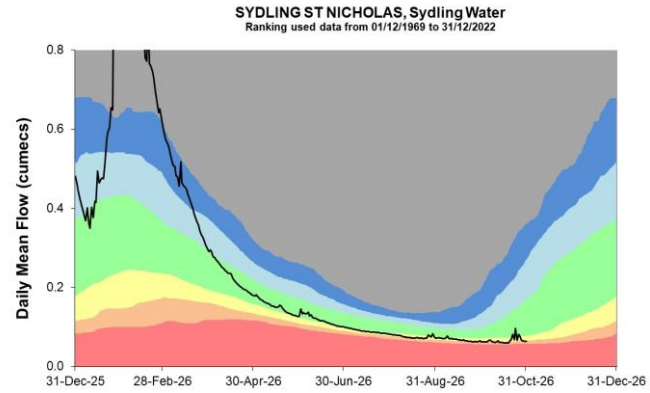


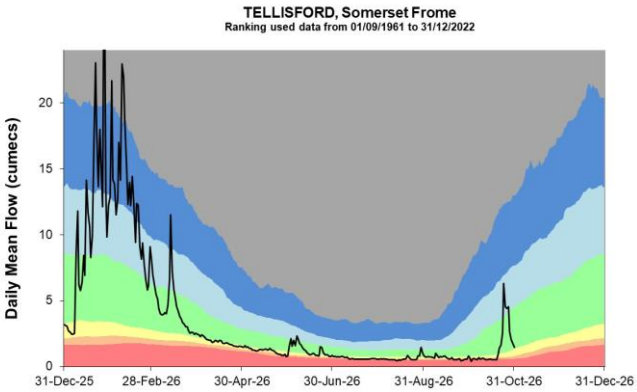
LOVINGTON, River Brue
Ranking used data from 01/10/1964 to 31/12/2022

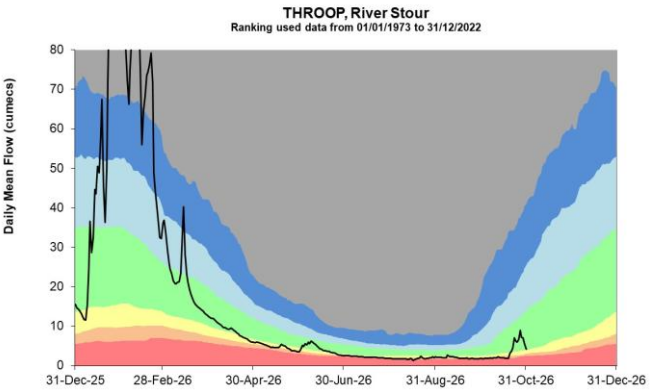










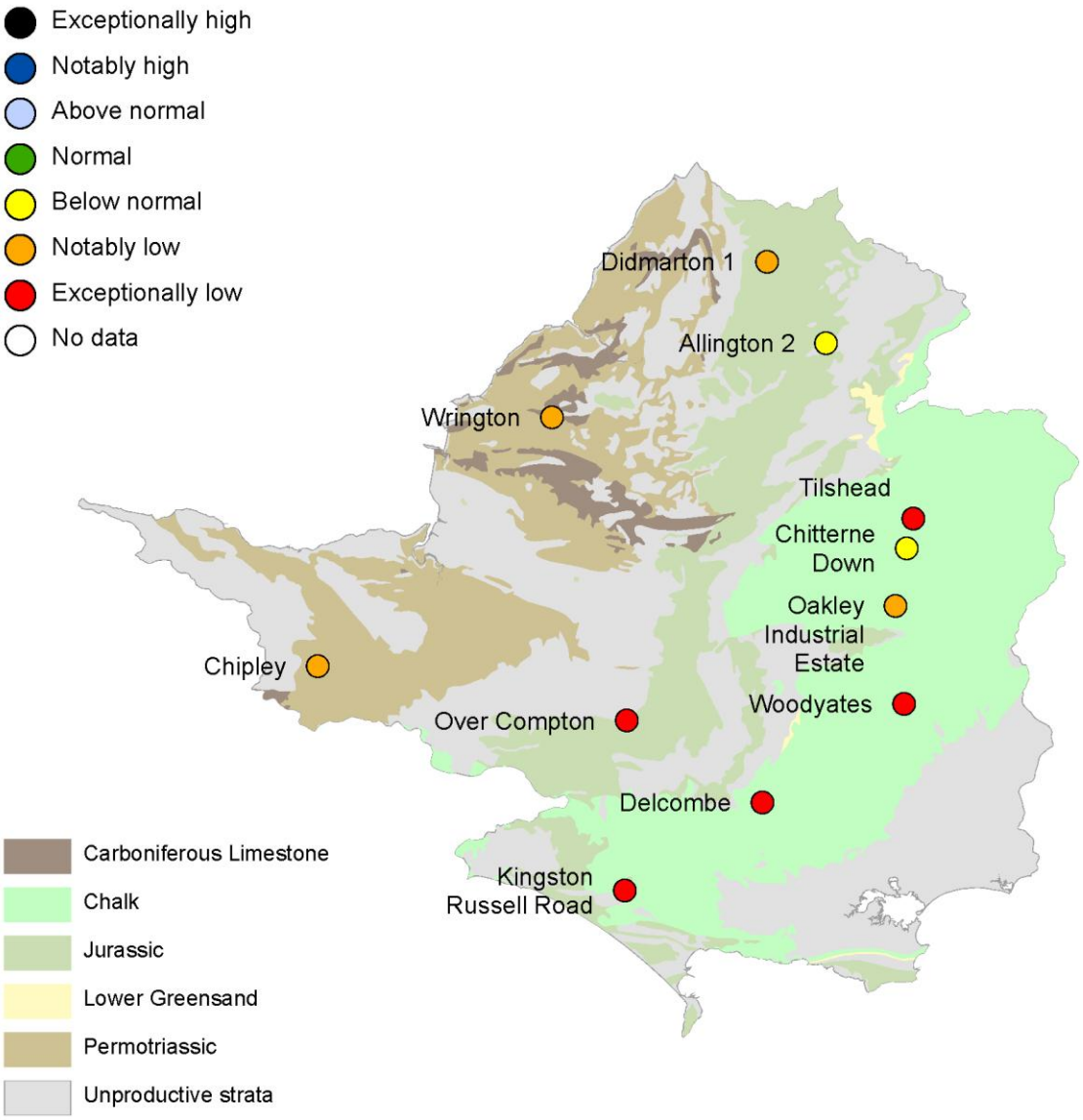


Source: Environment Agency, 2026. Flow data at Knapp Mill on the Hampshire Avon is omitted due to data issues.

5 Groundwater levels

5.1 Groundwater levels map

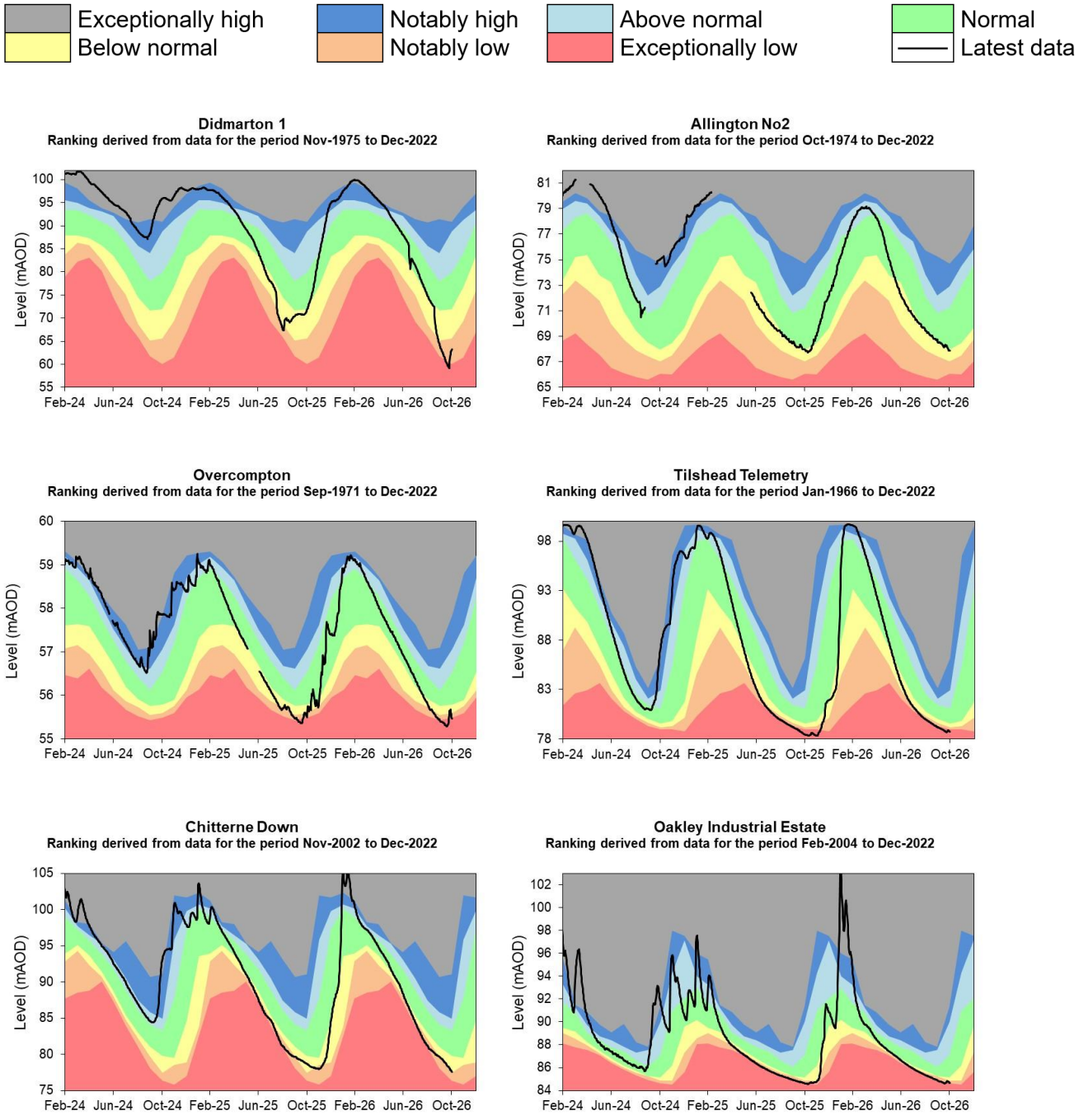
Figure 5.1: Groundwater levels for indicator sites at the end of October 2026, classed relative to an analysis of respective historic end of October levels. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.

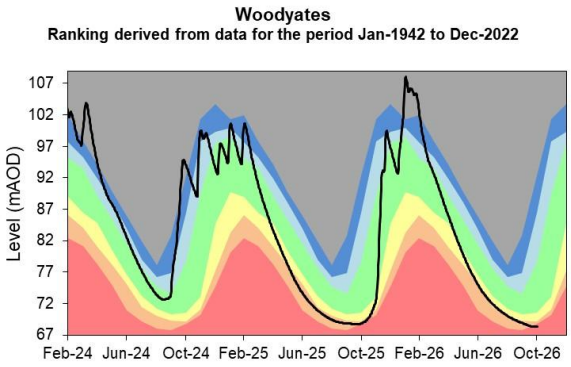


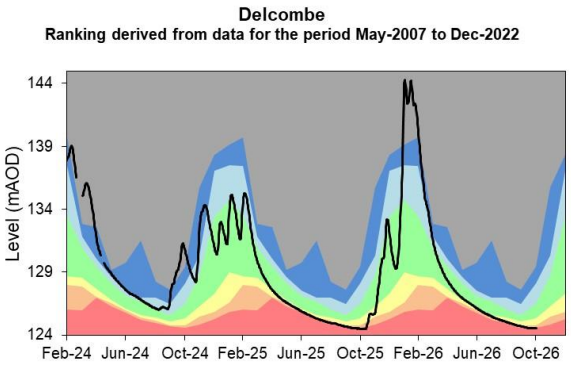
(Source: Environment Agency). Geological map reproduced with kind permission from UK Groundwater Forum, BGS copyright NERC. Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, AC0000807064, 2026.

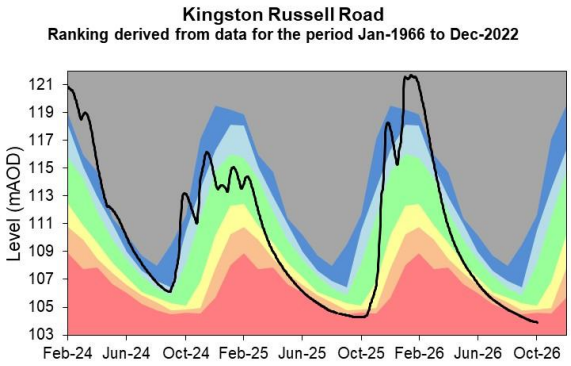
5.2 Groundwater level charts

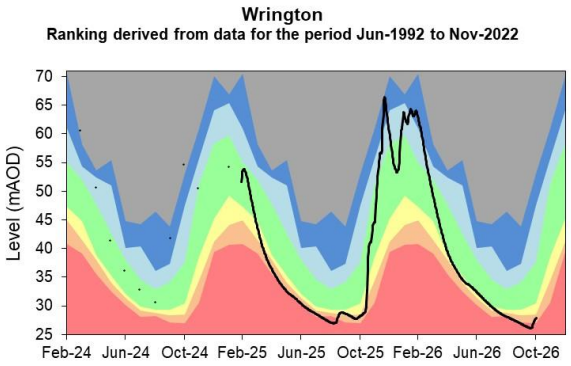
Figure 5.2: End of month groundwater levels at index groundwater level sites for major aquifers. 34 months compared to an analysis of historic end of month levels.

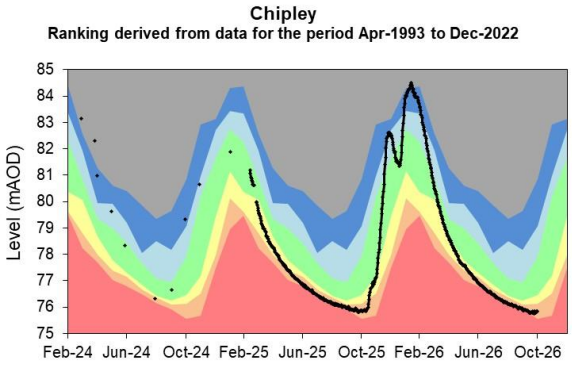








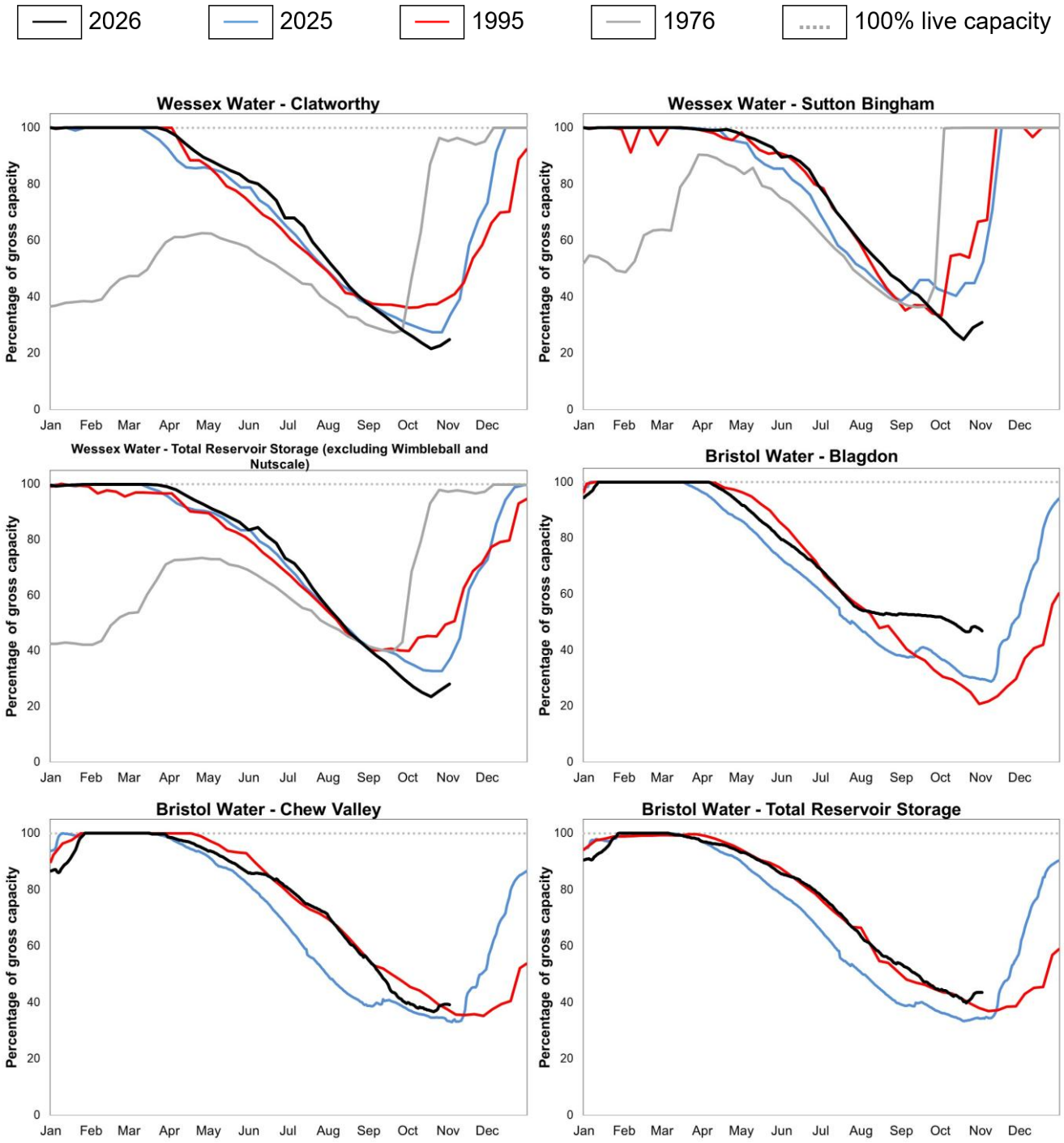




Source: Environment Agency, 2026.

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 October.

Area	Number of fluvial flood alerts in October	Number of coastal flood alerts in October	Number of groundwater flood alerts in October
North Wessex	3	6	0
South Wessex	3	10	0

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

Area	Number of fluvial flood warnings in October	Number of coastal flood warnings in October	Number of groundwater flood warnings in October
North Wessex	0	0	0
South Wessex	0	2	0

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

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

8 Stream support

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

Catchment	River	Stream support site	Gauging station	End of October 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	Off
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	Off
Dorset Frome	South Winterbourne	Winterbourne Abbas	Winterbourne Steepleton	No abstraction taking place
Dorset Frome	Watergates Stream	Watergates	Watergates (Wessex Water)	On

Catchment	River	Stream support site	Gauging station	End of October 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	Off
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	On
Hampshire Avon	Wylye	Brixton Deverill	Brixton Deverill & Heytesbury	On
Hampshire Avon	Wylye	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 October.

Catchment	Number of licences at restrict at the end of October	Number of licences at cease at the end of October
Bristol Avon	1	1
Dorset	2	2
Hampshire Avon	4	7
Somerset	1	3

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

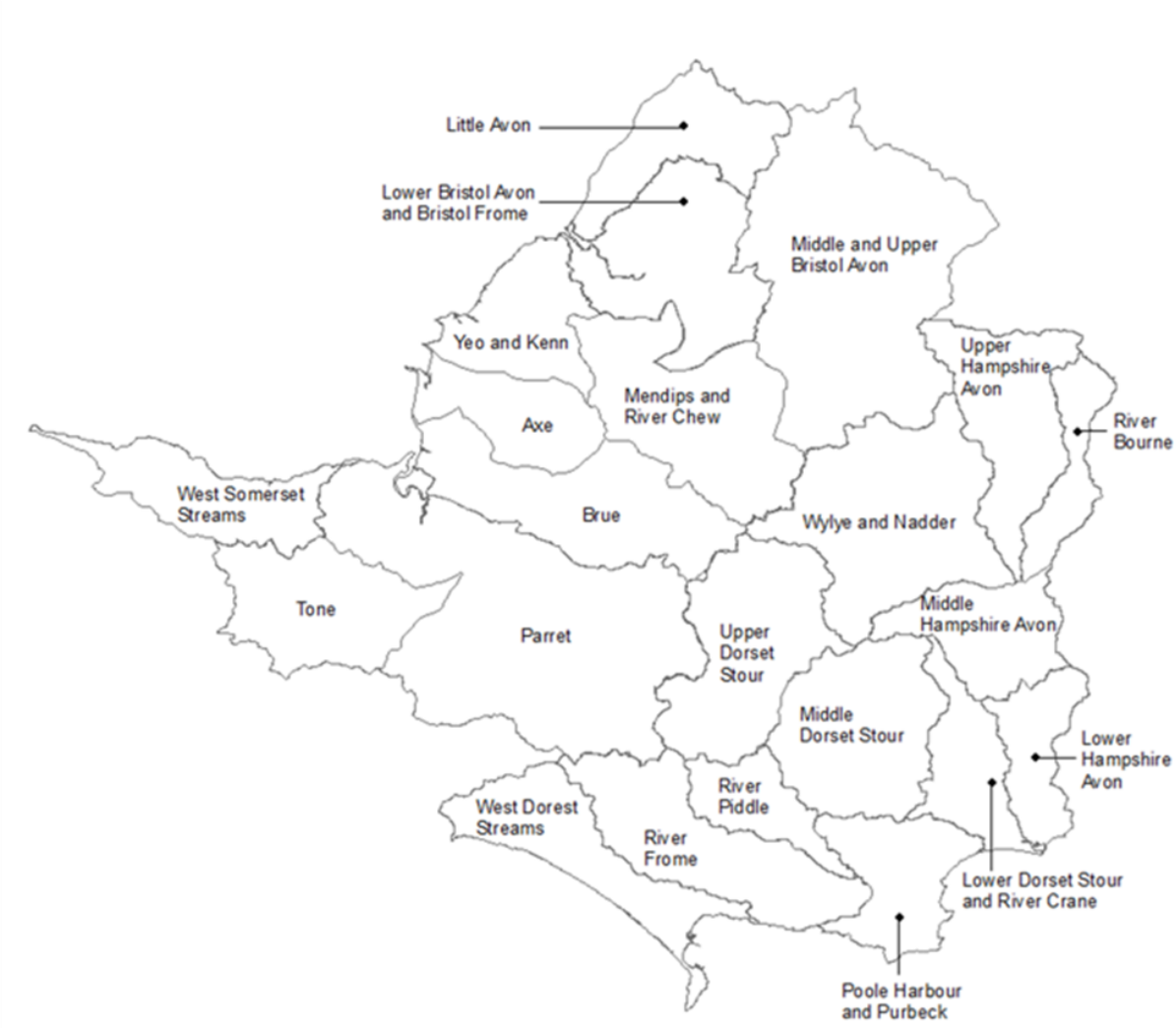
Value likely to fall within this band 8% of the time.

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	Oct 2026 rainfall % of long term average 1991 to 2020	Oct 2026 band	Aug 2026 to October cumulative band	May 2026 to October cumulative band	Nov 2025 to October cumulative band
Axe	130	Above Normal	Normal	Below normal	Above normal
Brue	130	Above Normal	Normal	Below normal	Above normal
Little Avon	113	Normal	Below normal	Below normal	Normal
Lower Bristol Avon And Bristol Frome	125	Above Normal	Normal	Below normal	Above normal
Lower Dorset Stour And River Crane	145	Above Normal	Normal	Normal	Above normal
Lower Hampshire Avon	149	Above Normal	Normal	Normal	Above normal
Mendips And River Chew	132	Above Normal	Normal	Below normal	Above normal
Middle And Upper Bristol Avon	131	Above Normal	Below normal	Below normal	Normal

Hydrological area	Oct 2026 rainfall % of long term average 1991 to 2020	Oct 2026 band	Aug 2026 to October cumulative band	May 2026 to October cumulative band	Nov 2025 to October cumulative band
Middle Dorset Stour	135	Above Normal	Normal	Below normal	Notably high
Middle Hampshire Avon	146	Above Normal	Normal	Below normal	Notably high
Parrett	104	Normal	Below normal	Notably low	Above normal
Poole Harbour And Purbeck	138	Above Normal	Normal	Below normal	Above normal
River Bourne	147	Above Normal	Normal	Below normal	Above normal
River Frome	116	Normal	Normal	Below normal	Notably high
River Piddle	121	Normal	Normal	Below normal	Notably high
Tone	108	Normal	Below normal	Notably low	Above normal
Upper Dorset Stour	120	Normal	Normal	Below normal	Above normal
Upper Hampshire Avon	149	Above Normal	Normal	Below normal	Above normal
West Dorset Streams	114	Normal	Normal	Below normal	Notably high

Hydrological area	Oct 2026 rainfall % of long term average 1991 to 2020	Oct 2026 band	Aug 2026 to October cumulative band	May 2026 to October cumulative band	Nov 2025 to October cumulative band
West Somerset Streams	119	Normal	Below normal	Notably low	Normal
Wylye And Nadder	141	Above Normal	Normal	Below normal	Above normal
Yeo And Kenn	128	Above Normal	Normal	Below normal	Above normal

11.2 River flows table

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

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

11.3 Groundwater table

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

Site name	Aquifer	End of Oct 2026 band	End of Sep 2026 band
Chipley	Somerset Tone Otter Sandstone	Notably low	Exceptionally low
Wrington	North Somerset Carboniferous Limestone	Notably low	Exceptionally low