

SUMMARY The outlook for May is for below normal river flows across most of the UK, except southern Wales and south-west England, where flows are likely to be normal. Groundwater levels are expected to continue to decline in most areas, although above normal levels are likely to persist in parts of the southern chalk. Over the period May-July, river flows in most areas are likely to continue to be below normal, with the potential for current low to exceptionally low flows to persist in some catchments. Flows in western Scotland and Northern Ireland are likely to be normal.

Rainfall:

Rainfall across much of Great Britain was very low in April, continuing the dry period that began in February. Many areas received less than half their normal rainfall, with parts of northern England and western Scotland recording below 30% of their April average. The exceptions to this pattern have been in Northern Ireland, where rainfall has been more normal, and in southern Wales, Cornwall and Devon, which experienced above-average April rainfall. The forecast (issued by the Met Office on 28.04.25) shows a signal for a hotter than average May-July, albeit with fairly balanced likelihoods of wet and dry conditions. The dry start to May is likely to be followed by a period of more unsettled weather, especially in western parts.

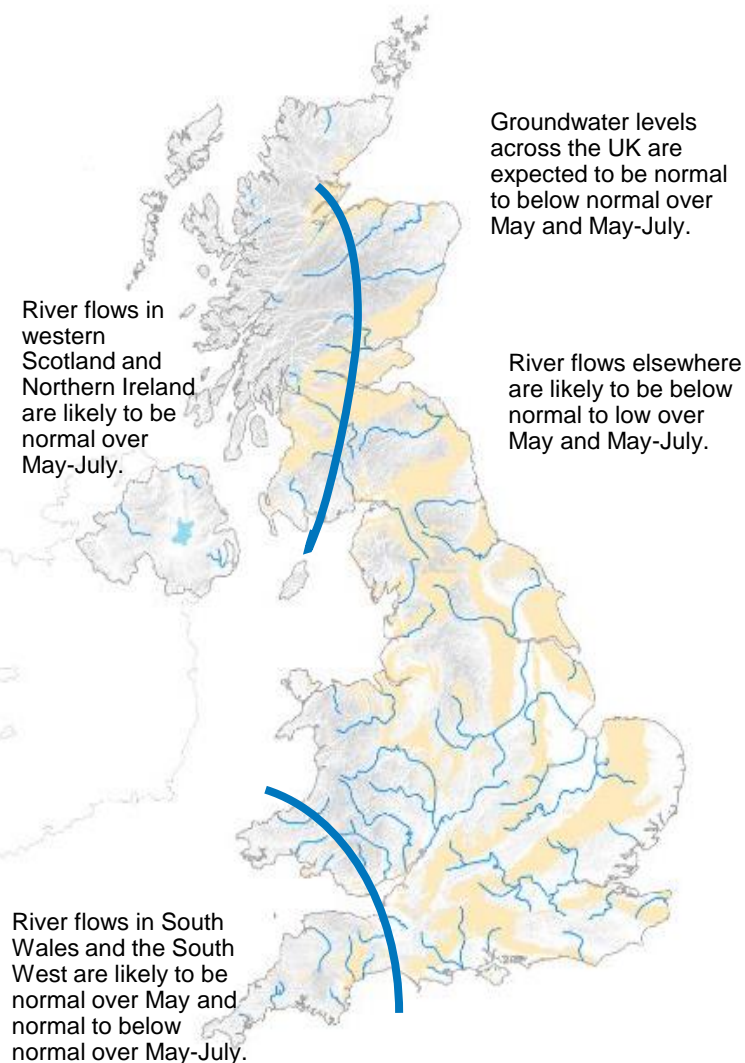
River flows:

River flows in April were very low in most areas, with exceptionally low flows in northern England and southern and eastern Scotland. The exceptions were in groundwater-dominated catchments, where flows were sustained by the above-normal stores resulting from wet conditions in winter, and the south-west, where flows were normal to above normal due to the recent rainfall. The outlook for May is for below normal to low flows in almost all areas, except the South West in which river flows are likely to be normal. For May-July, river flows are likely to continue to be below normal to low, although western Scotland is more likely to experience normal flows. The dry start to May increases the likelihood that low to exceptionally low flows in some areas persist into the summer.

Groundwater:

Groundwater levels in April have declined over the last month but remain normal across much of southern England. Below-normal levels have been recorded in the Cotswolds, Dorset and eastern Yorkshire, while above normal levels persist in the southern Chalk in Essex and Hertfordshire. The outlook for May indicates these patterns are likely to persist, with normal to above-normal levels in the South, especially the Chalk, and below normal levels in northern England. Very similar patterns are expected over the period May-July. Although the overall tendency is to return towards normal levels, low groundwater levels in some areas are likely to continue for several months.

The UK Hydrological Outlook provides an outlook for the water situation for the United Kingdom over the next three months and beyond. For guidance on how to interpret the outlook, a wider range of information, and a full description of underpinning methods, please visit the website: www.hydoutuk.net



Shaded areas show principal aquifers

About the UK Hydrological Outlook:

This document presents an outlook for the UK water situation for the next 1-3 months and beyond, using observational datasets, meteorological forecasts and a suite of hydrological modelling tools. The outlook is produced in a collaboration between the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH), British Geological Survey (BGS), the Met Office, the Environment Agency (EA), Natural Resources Wales (NRW), the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), and for Northern Ireland, the Department for Infrastructure – Rivers (DfIR).

Data and Models:

The UK Hydrological Outlook depends on the active cooperation of many data suppliers. This cooperation is gratefully acknowledged. Historic river flow and groundwater data are sourced from the [UK National River Flow Archive](#) and the [National Groundwater Level Archive](#). Contemporary data are provided by the EA, SEPA, NRW and DfIR. These data are used to initialise hydrological models, and to provide outlook information based on statistical analysis of historical analogues.

Climate forecasts are produced by the Met Office. Hydrological modelling is undertaken by UKCEH using the Grid-to-Grid and GR6J hydrological models. Hydrogeological modelling uses the AquilMod model run by BGS. Supporting documentation is available from the Outlooks website: <https://hydoutuk.net/about/methods>

Presentation:

The language used in the summary presented overleaf generally places flows and groundwater levels into just three classes, i.e. below normal, normal, and above normal. However, the underpinning methods use as many as seven classes as defined in the graphic to the right, i.e. the summary uses a simpler classification than some of the methods. On those occasions when it is appropriate to provide greater discrimination at the extremes the terminology and definitions of the seven class scheme will be adopted.

Percentile range of
historic values for
relevant month

Exceptionally high flow	> 95
Notably high flow	87-95
Above normal	72-87
Normal range	28-72
Below normal	13-28
Notably low flow	5-13
Exceptionally low flow	< 5

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The UK Hydrological Outlook is supported by the Natural Environment Research Council funded NC-UK (NE/Y006208/1) and [Hydro-JULES](#) (NE/S017380/1) Programmes.

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Further information:

For more detailed information about the UK Hydrological Outlook, and the derivation of the maps, plots and interpretation provided in this outlook, please visit the UK Hydrological Outlook website. The website features a host of other background information, including a wider range of sources of information which are used in the preparation of this Outlook. Dynamic access to many of the outputs of the UK Hydrological Portal are available on the [UK Hydrological Outlooks Portal](#).

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Reference for the UK Hydrological Outlook:

UK Hydrological Outlook, 14 May 2025, UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, Oxfordshire UK, Online, <https://www.hydoutuk.net/latest-outlook/>

Other Sources of Information:

The UK Hydrological Outlook should be used alongside other sources of up-to-date information on the current water resources status and flood risk.

Environment Agency Water Situation Reports: provides summary of water resources status on a monthly and weekly basis for England: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/water-situation-reports-for-england>

Flood warnings are continually updated, and should be consulted for an up-to-date and localised assessment of flood risk:

- Environment Agency: <https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/map>
- Natural Resources Wales: <https://flood-warning.naturalresources.wales/>
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency: <https://www.sepa.org.uk/flooding.aspx>

Hydrological Summary for the UK: provides summary of current water resources status for the UK: <https://nrfa.ceh.ac.uk/monthly-hydrological-summary-uk>

UK Met Office forecasts for the UK: <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/>

UK Water Resources Portal: monitor the UK hydrological situation in near real-time including rainfall, river flow, groundwater and soil moisture from COSMOS-UK: <https://eip.ceh.ac.uk/hydrology/water-resources/>