UK Hydrological Outlook

UKCEH

Period: From February 2026

Issued on 05.02.2026 using data to the end of January 2026

SUMMARY The outlook for February is for above normal to notably high river flows across eastern Scotland and southern England. Elsewhere, river flows and groundwater levels in the normal range are most likely. Above normal flows and groundwater levels in eastern Scotland and southern England are likely to persist through the February-April period. For the rest of the UK, normal flows are likely to predominate over the next three months, with normal to above normal groundwater levels.

Rainfall:

January's rainfall was above average for the UK (117%), but with strong regional contrasts. Eastern Scotland, Northern Ireland and parts of central and southern England recorded over 170% of their average January rainfall. Much of this rainfall occurred towards the end of the month from storms 'Ingrid' and 'Chandra'. In contrast, northwestern areas received below normal rainfall, with northern Scotland receiving less than two-thirds of average. The forecast (issued by the Met Office on 26.01.26) indicates the chance of widespread wet conditions in February is slightly less likely than normal, but wetter conditions over southern UK are possible. Over the next three months, the forecast indicates rainfall in the normal range is likely with chances of a wet and windy February-April close to normal.

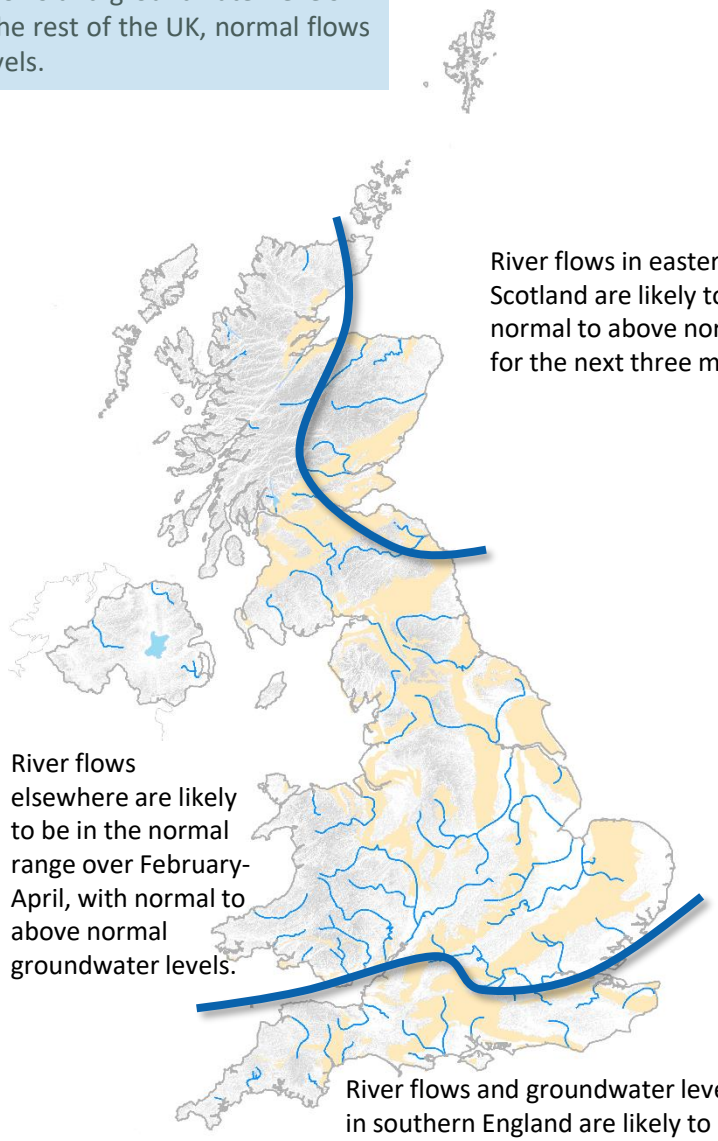
River flows:

January river flows were normal to below normal in northwestern areas but widely above normal elsewhere, with notably to exceptionally high flows in eastern Scotland, Northern Ireland and parts of southern England. River flows in groundwater-dominated areas of East Anglia remain in the normal range. Following a wet start to February for eastern Scotland and parts of southern England, the outlook is for above normal to notably high flows in these regions to persist over February. River flows elsewhere are likely to be in the normal range, except for western Scotland where normal to below normal flows are possible. The outlook for the next three months (February-April) is for normal flows to dominate across the UK, except for eastern Scotland and southern England where above normal flows are likely to persist. With wetter conditions less likely in northern areas, there is also an elevated chance of below normal flows persisting for western Scotland.

Groundwater:

Groundwater levels were mostly normal to above normal at the end of January. Notably to exceptionally high levels were registered in Northern Ireland and southern England whilst normal to below normal levels were seen in eastern Scotland and the chalk of East Anglia. The February outlook is for levels in southern England to remain notably to exceptionally high. Across the rest of the UK, levels are likely to be in the normal range, with continued below normal levels in parts of East Anglia. Over the next three months, groundwater levels are likely to stay above normal to notably high in southern England and normal to above normal elsewhere.

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

UK HYDROLOGICAL OUTLOOK

February 2026

UKCEH · BGS British Geological Survey · Department for Infrastructure An Roinn Bonneagair www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk · Environment Agency · Met Office · Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru Natural Resources Wales · sepa

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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 AquiMod 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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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, 05 February 2026, 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:
i. Environment Agency: https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/map
ii. Natural Resources Wales: https://flood-warning.naturalresources.wales/
iii. 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/

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British Geological Survey

Department for Infrastructure An Roinn Bonneagair www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Environment Agency

Met Office

Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru Natural Resources Wales

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