UK Hydrological Outlook

UKCEH

Period: From March 2026

Issued on 09.03.2026 using data to the end of February 2026

SUMMARY The outlook for March is for above normal river flows and groundwater levels across parts of southern and central England. River flows and groundwater levels elsewhere are likely to be normal to above normal for March. Over the March-May period, above normal river flows and groundwater levels are likely in southern and central England. Across the rest of the UK, river flows are likely to be in the normal range and groundwater levels are likely to remain normal to above normal throughout Spring.

Rainfall:

February's rainfall was above average for the UK, with 123% of average recorded. Much of England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and eastern Scotland recorded more than 170% of their average February rainfall. Rainfall for western Scotland was below normal, with large areas seeing less than 70% of the February average. The long-range forecast (issued by the Met Office on 23.02.2026) indicates a slight signal for a wet March, with a stronger signal for mild temperatures. Over March-May, the forecast suggests that the next three months are likely to be warm with a normal chance of wet conditions, and a slightly increased chance of average rainfall.

River flows:

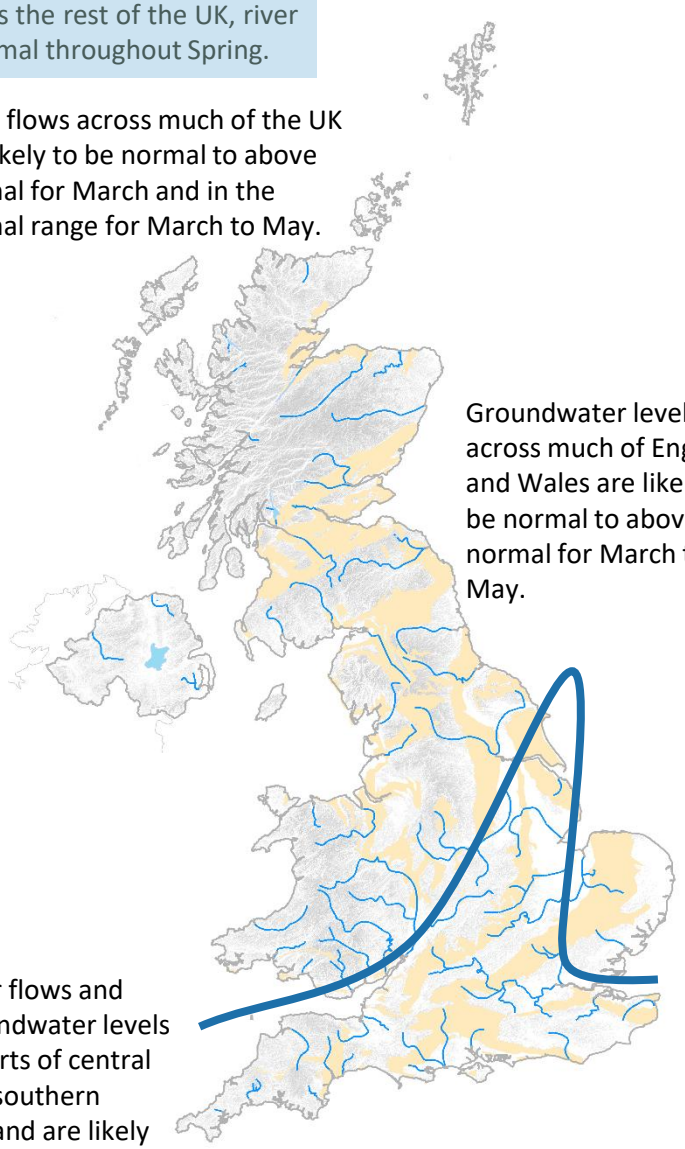
River flows in February were below normal for northern Scotland and in the normal range for western Scotland, northwestern England, northern Wales, and parts of East Anglia. Elsewhere, February river flows were above normal to notably high, with some catchments on the south coast of England registering new record high February flows.

The outlook for March indicates that above normal flows are likely across much of central and southern England, particularly in groundwater-dominated catchments in the south of England. For the rest of the UK, river flows are likely to be normal to above normal for March. The outlook for Spring (March-May) is for river flows across much of the UK to be within the normal range, except for parts of southern and central England where above normal flows are likely to persist.

Groundwater:

Groundwater levels at the end of February were above normal or notably high in most aquifers, except for East Anglia and northern Scotland where some boreholes recorded normal or below normal levels. The outlook indicates that groundwater levels in the southern Chalk, Yorkshire and Lincolnshire Chalk, and Jurassic limestones are likely to be above normal to high over the coming month. Normal to above normal levels are likely elsewhere. Over the next three months, groundwater levels in the southern Chalk are likely to remain above normal to high. Across the rest of the UK, levels are likely to be normal to above normal for the March-May period.

River flows across much of the UK are likely to be normal to above normal for March and in the normal range for March to May.



Groundwater levels across much of England and Wales are likely to be normal to above normal for March to May.

River flows and groundwater levels in parts of central and southern England are likely to be above normal for March to May.

Shaded areas show principal aquifers

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

UK HYDROLOGICAL OUTLOOK

March 2026

UKCEH · 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

UK Hydrological Outlook

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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.

Contact:

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Reference for the UK Hydrological Outlook:

UK Hydrological Outlook, 09 March 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

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