UK Hydrological Outlook

UKCEH

Period: From April 2026

Issued on 09.04.2026 using data to the end of March 2026

SUMMARY Low rainfall across much of England and Wales has led to river flows that are normal in most areas, while higher rainfall in western Scotland and north-west England means that river flows in these areas are above normal. These patterns are expected to persist through April, with flows in much of England, Wales and Northern Ireland likely to decline to the normal or below normal ranges. Groundwater levels are likely to remain high through April and decline to normal over the following months.

Rainfall:

After a wet start to 2026 in many areas in January and February, March's rainfall was below normal across much of England, Wales, eastern Scotland and parts of Northern Ireland. The driest areas saw half their average rainfall. In contrast, higher than normal rainfall was observed in northwestern Scotland and north-west England, which in a few areas exceeded 150% of their average rainfall.

The forecast (issued by the Met Office on 30.03.2026) indicates a signal for an increased chance of a drier-than usual April, with warmer temperatures more probable than cooler. Over April-June, the forecast indicates that increased chances of warm temperatures are very likely to continue, but rainfall is likely to be near-average.

River flows:

March's river flows were normal, with some rivers still showing above-normal flows persisting from their higher levels over the preceding months. These were most evident in the groundwater-dominated catchments of southern England. Above normal flows were also seen in the regions that experienced higher than usual rainfall in northwestern Scotland and north-west England.

The Outlook for April is that flows are likely to remain normal to above normal in western Scotland and in southern England, with flows elsewhere declining to the normal to below normal range. Over April-June, these patterns are likely to persist, although more of the (currently above normal) groundwater-fed catchments in counties along the south coast of England are likely to return to their normal range.

Groundwater:

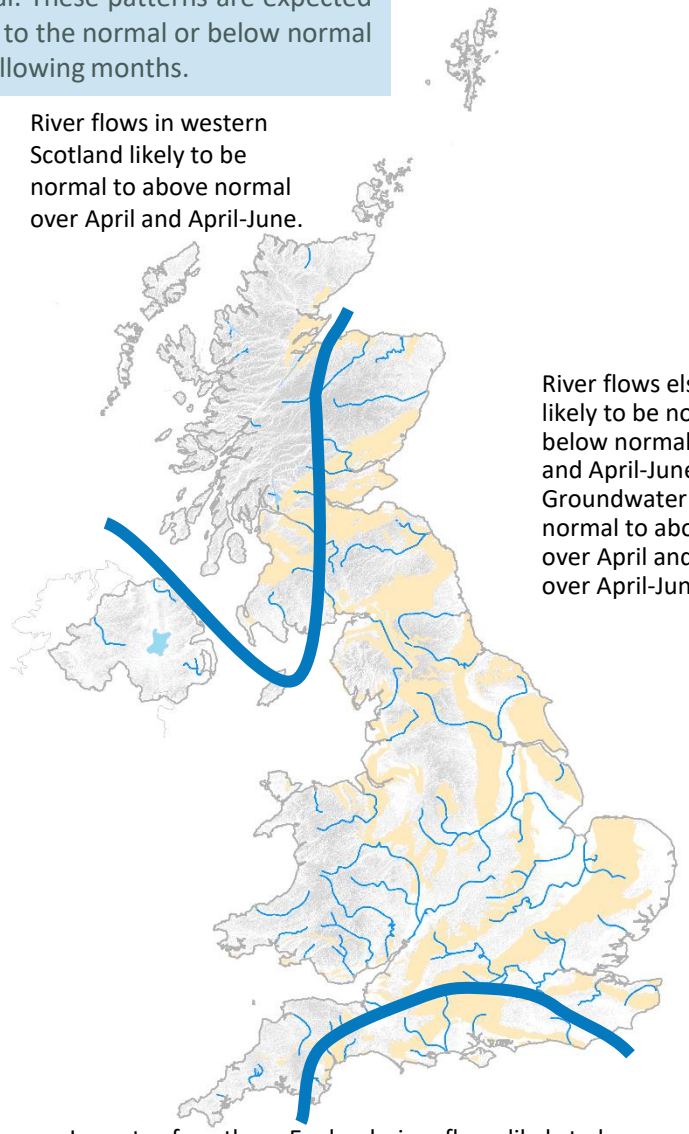
Groundwater levels at the end of March remain normal to above normal in many of the principal aquifers, especially in the Jurassic limestone and southern chalk. In the parts of the chalk aquifer in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, and Hampshire, levels are notably high.

The Outlook is that these conditions are likely to persist through April. In most areas levels are likely to decline and become normal over the period April-June. Groundwater levels in the southern chalk are likely to remain normal to above normal over April-June.

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

River flows in western Scotland likely to be normal to above normal over April and April-June.

River flows elsewhere likely to be normal to below normal over April and April-June. Groundwater levels likely normal to above normal over April and normal over April-June.



In parts of southern England, river flows likely to be normal to above normal in April. Groundwater levels likely continue notably high in April, becoming normal to above normal over April-June.

Shaded areas show principal aquifers

UK HYDROLOGICAL OUTLOOK

April 2026

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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

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.

Contact:

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Reference for the UK Hydrological Outlook:

UK Hydrological Outlook, 09 April 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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