

**SUMMARY** The outlook for May is for below normal to notably low river flows across central southern England, normal to below normal for eastern Scotland and normal flows elsewhere. Below normal river flows in central southern England are likely to persist through May-July. For the rest of the UK, May-July river flows are likely to be normal to above normal in northwestern areas and normal elsewhere. Groundwater levels for most boreholes are likely to remain normal to above normal across the UK.

**Rainfall:**

April rainfall was below average for the UK (77%), with particularly dry conditions for England. Large parts of central southern England received less than one third of the average rainfall (fourth driest for the Anglian region since 1890). In contrast, above average rainfall was registered for western Scotland, with particularly high rainfall over the Western Isles.

The one-month forecast for May (issued by the Met Office on 27.04.2026) indicates near average rainfall is the most likely scenario, although a wet May is more likely than a dry one. Over the next three months, the forecast indicates a higher than normal chance of a hot May-July with near-average rainfall most likely, although a wet 3-month period is more probable than dry.

**River flows:**

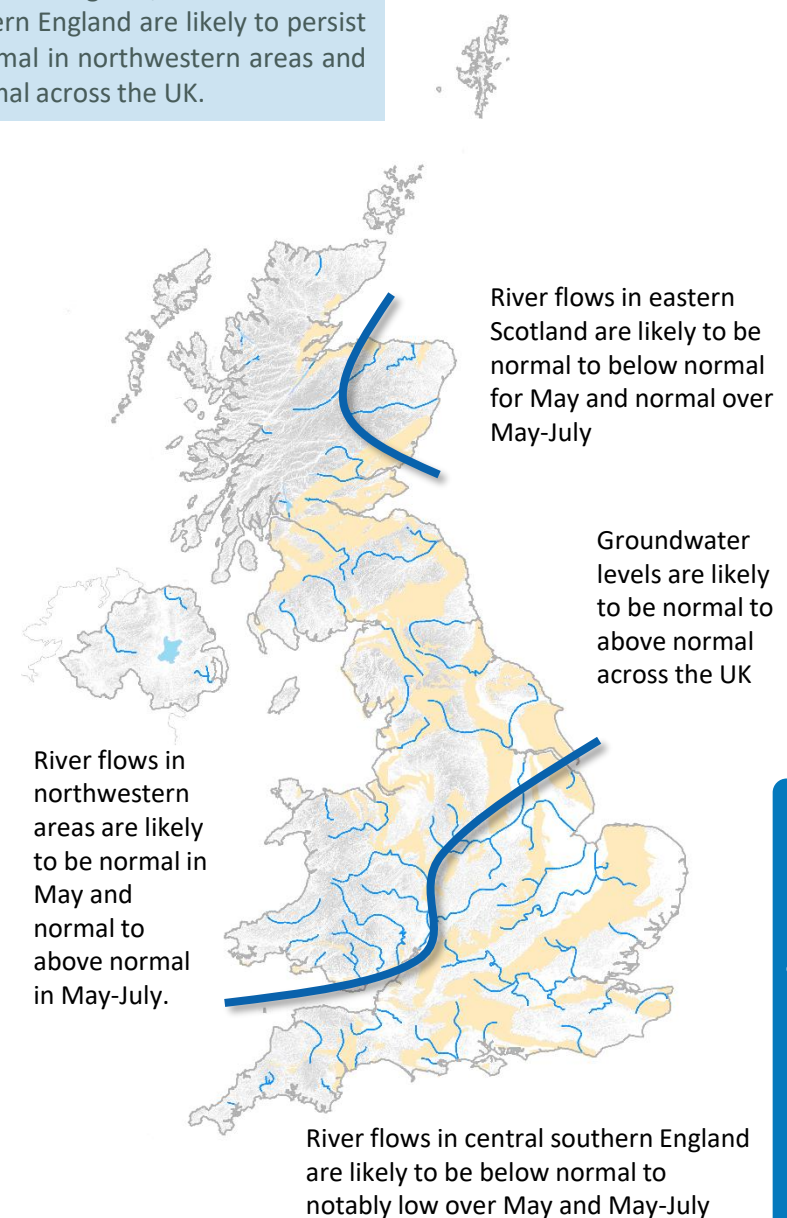
River flows in April were widely below normal across central and southern England and for some catchments in eastern Scotland. Flows in western Scotland and some groundwater-dominated catchments in the far south were in the above normal to notably high range.

Following a dry April, the outlook is for below normal to notably low flows across central southern England and eastern Scotland. Elsewhere, flows are likely to be in the normal range. The outlook for the next three months (May-July) is for below normal to notably low flows to persist in central southern England while flows in northwestern areas are likely to be normal to above normal.

**Groundwater:**

Groundwater levels at the end of April were normal to above normal in most principal aquifers, except for eastern Scotland and south Wales where some boreholes recorded notably or exceptionally low levels, respectively.

The outlook for May is for groundwater levels to remain normal to above normal across the UK. Notably high levels are likely for some boreholes in the Southern, Yorkshire and Lincolnshire Chalk while levels at South Wales is expected be below normal to exceptionally low. Over the next three months, groundwater levels are likely to remain normal to above normal, with the exception for South Wales where levels may recover but are likely to remain in the normal to below normal range.



May 2026

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](http://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 partnership aims to ensure that all Content provided is accurate and consistent with its current scientific understanding. However, the science which underlies hydrological and hydrogeological forecasts and climate projections is constantly evolving. Therefore any element of the Content which involves a forecast or a prediction should not be relied upon as though it were a statement of fact. To the fullest extent permitted by applicable law, the UK Hydrological Outlook Partnership excludes all warranties or representations (express or implied) in respect of the Content.

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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, 11 May 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:

- 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://nra.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/>