

SUMMARY

The outlook for September is for below normal flows and groundwater levels across southern Britain and eastern Scotland, with current low flows and levels persisting and a continuation of drought impacts. The three-month outlook indicates below normal flows and levels are likely to continue through autumn in southeast England. For northern and western areas September flows are likely to be in the normal range but normal to above normal for the autumn, while groundwater levels are likely to be normal to below in September before tending towards normal.



Rainfall:

Rainfall in August was below average across much of the UK, except northwest Scotland and localised parts of central and eastern England. It was particularly dry across southern Britain, which saw little appreciable rainfall in the first half of August.

The Met Office seasonal forecast (issued on 1st September 2026) indicates a slightly higher tendency for September to be a wet month overall. The Outlook for autumn (September – November) indicates it is more likely to be wet than dry, with the latter part of the season seeing an increase in the potential for impacts from heavy rainfall. The current strong El Niño increases the confidence in this seasonal forecast relative to a typical autumn.

River flows:

Rivers generally continued to decline through much of August, leading to widespread exceptionally low late-summer flows comparable with, or lower than, notable past droughts. Except for western Scotland, average flows for August were below normal across the UK and often notably or exceptionally low.

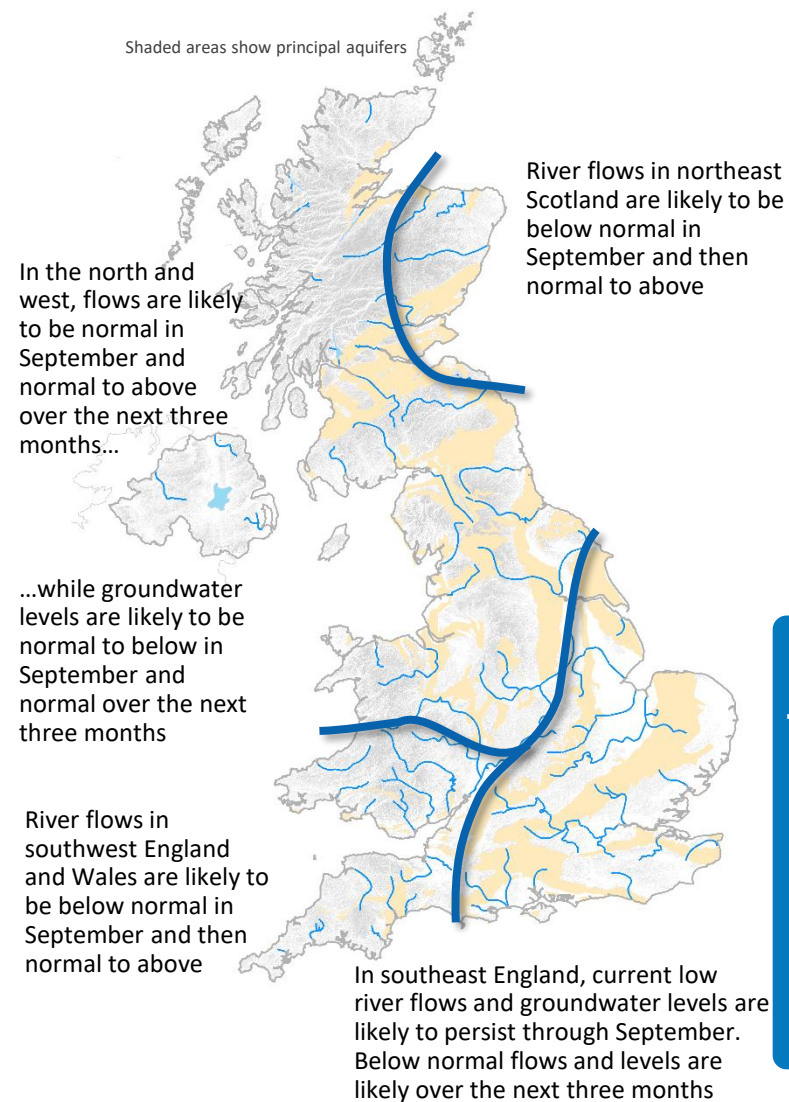
The September Outlook is for below normal flows across southern Britain and northeast Scotland, with current notably or exceptionally low flows likely to persist in many catchments. Elsewhere normal flows are most likely. The outlook for autumn also indicates a broad contrast, with below normal flows in the southeast (with notably or exceptionally low autumn flows possible, especially in groundwater-fed catchments) and normal to above normal flows in northern and western areas. The potential for above normal flows reflects the likelihood of a wetter late autumn in these responsive regions.

Groundwater:

Groundwater levels in August were in the normal range or below normal, with notably low levels in parts of southern England and Wales.

The September outlook indicates a similar picture, with normal to below normal levels predominating and notably or exceptionally low levels continuing in some localities in southern England and Wales. The outlook for autumn indicates a return to normal levels across most aquifer areas, but with below normal (and, locally, notably low) levels persisting in the Chalk of southeast England.

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



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 AquMod 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

Disclaimer and liability:

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.

Your use of the Content is entirely at your own risk. We make no warranty, representation or guarantee that the Content is error free or fit for your intended use.

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.

Copyright:

Some of the features displayed on the maps contained in this report are based on the following data with permission of the controller of HMSO.

- Ordnance Survey data. © Crown copyright and/or database right 2005. Licence no. 100017897.
- Land and Property Services data. © Crown copyright and database right, S&LA 145.
- Met Office rainfall data. © Crown copyright.
- The three month outlook contained in the hydrological outlook is licensed under the terms of the [Open Government Licence](#)

All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.

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:

UK Hydrological Outlooks, UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, Wallingford, Oxfordshire, OX10 8BB
t: 01491 838800 e: <https://hydoutuk.net/contact>

Reference for the UK Hydrological Outlook:

UK Hydrological Outlook, 09 September 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://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/>