Hydrological Outlook UK

Period: From December 2020

Issued on 08.12.2020 using data to the end of November 2020

SUMMARY

The outlook for December is for normal flows, and normal to above normal groundwater levels across the majority of the UK. River flows across the Chalk aquifer of the south-east are likely to be above normal over the next one-to-three months, and groundwater levels in the south-western parts of this aquifer are also likely to be above normal for December and notably to exceptionally high over the next three months. For December-January-February as a whole, river flows and groundwater levels across northern and western parts of the UK are likely to be above normal to notably high.

Rainfall:

Rainfall in November was significantly below average for most of the UK. Across the eastern parts of the UK, precipitation was as low as 30% of average. North-western parts of the UK saw average to above average rainfall.

The rainfall outlook for December (issued by the Met Office on 29.11.2020) is that the chance of above-average precipitation is close to normal. For December-January-February as a whole, above-average precipitation is more likely than below-average precipitation. The probability that UK-average precipitation for December-January-February will fall into the driest of five categories is around 10% and the probability that it will fall into the wettest of five categories is around 45% (the 1981-2010 probability for each of these categories is 20%). A moderate to strong La Niña, among other atmospheric drivers, is expected to affect the latter part of this winter.

River flows:

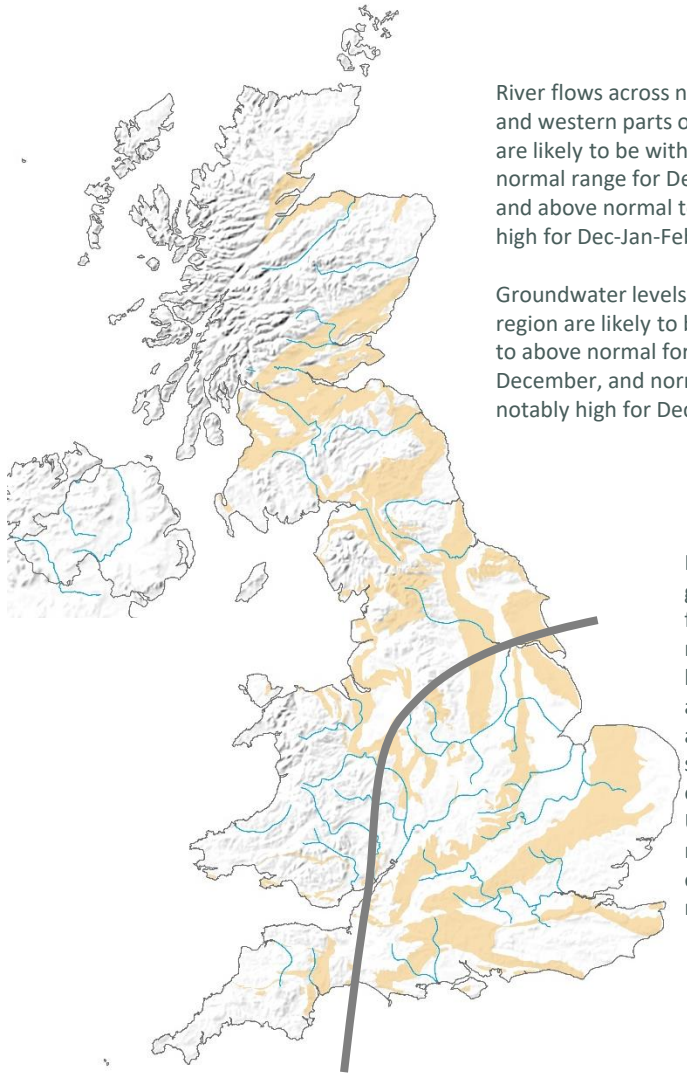
River flows in November continued to show the fairly consistent pattern that has been established over the past six months. Flows in north-western parts of the UK, and the chalk aquifer driven catchments of the south-east have been above normal to notably high. Flows across the north-east have been normal to below normal. Elsewhere flows have been within the normal range.

Flows at this time of year demonstrate two modes of predictability. In the south-east, where river flows over groundwater aquifers can be predicted using persistence, we expect flows to remain above normal for the next one-to-three months. Catchments elsewhere in central and south-eastern England are likely to be within the normal range for the next one-to-three months. In the north and western parts of the UK, river flows in winter are strongly driven by atmospheric weather patterns. For this reason, river flows in the north and west are likely to be within the normal range for December, but are then forecast to be above normal to notably high for December-January-February as a whole.

Groundwater:

Groundwater levels in the UK were predominantly normal to above normal for November, with localised notably and exceptionally high levels in the Permo-Triassic sandstones of the north-west.

Groundwater levels in December are likely to be within the normal range, with some above normal and notably high levels in the north of England and in the south-western Chalk. For December-January-February as a whole, groundwater levels are likely to be normal to above normal, with some exceptionally high levels predicted in the north-western sandstones, and southern Chalk.



River flows across northern and western parts of the UK are likely to be within the normal range for December, and above normal to notably high for Dec-Jan-Feb.

Groundwater levels in this region are likely to be normal to above normal for December, and normal to notably high for Dec-Jan-Feb.

River flows and groundwater levels for the next three months are likely to be above normal across chalk aquifers in southern and eastern parts of the UK, and within the normal range elsewhere in this region

Shaded areas show principal aquifers

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Hydrological Outlook UK

About the 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 and 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 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, PDM and CLASSIC hydrological models and by the EA using CATCHMOD. Hydrogeological modelling uses the R-groundwater model run by BGS and CATCHMOD run by the EA. Supporting documentation is available from the Outlooks website:
http://www.hydoutuk.net/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:

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From April 2018 the Hydrological Outlook is supported by the Natural Environment Research Council funded UK-SCAPE and Hydro-JULES Programmes.

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Further information:

For more detailed information about the Hydrological Outlook, and the derivation of the maps, plots and interpretation provided in this outlook, please visit the Hydrological Outlook UK 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.

Contact:

Hydrological Outlooks UK, UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, Wallingford, Oxfordshire, OX10 8BB
t: 01491 692371 e: enquiries@hydoutuk.net

Reference for the Hydrological Outlook:

Hydrological Outlook UK, 2020, December, UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Oxfordshire UK, Online,
http://www.hydoutuk.net/latest-outlook/

Other Sources of Information:

The 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
Scottish Environment Protection Agency: http://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:
www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/forecast/#?tab=regionalForecast

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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UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

Outlook based on hydrological persistence and analogy

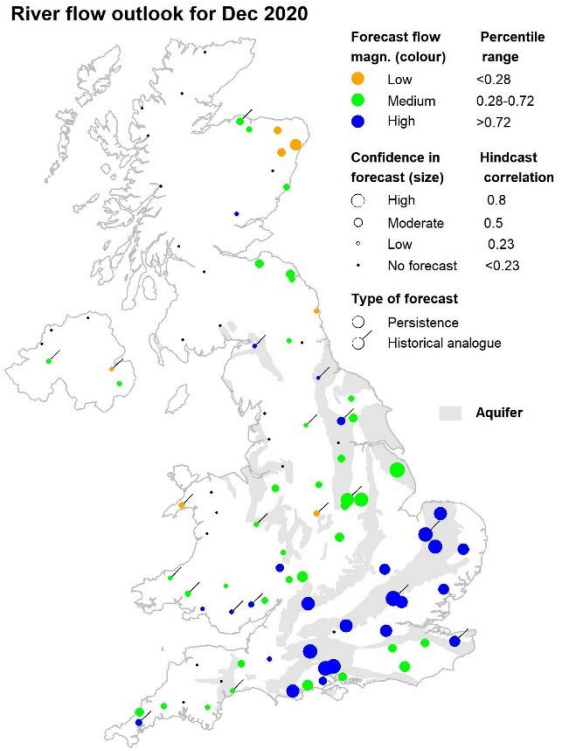
Overview

Period: December 2020 – February 2021

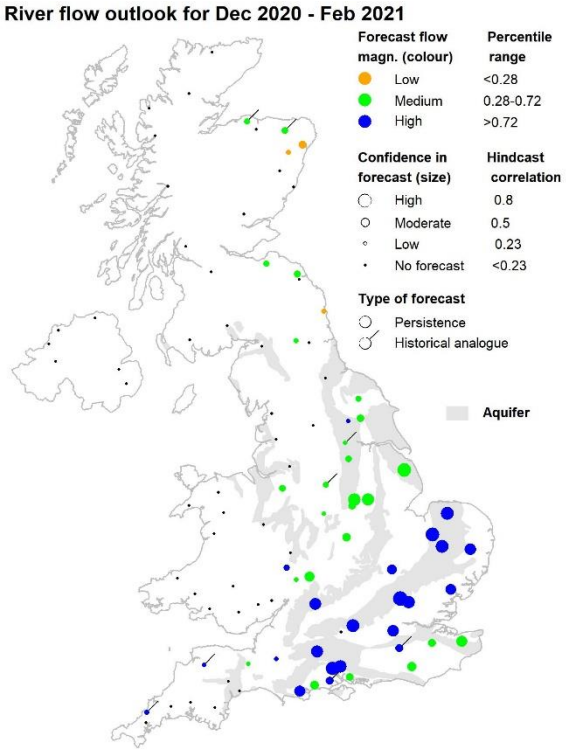
Issued on 04.12.2020 using data to the end of November 2020

SUMMARY

The outlooks for December and for December-February are for normal to above normal flows in south-east England and for normal to below normal flows elsewhere. Note that there are very few forecasts available for the north and west.



1-month flow outlook



3-month flow outlook

Outlooks from hydrological analogues are based on a comparison of river flow during recent months with flows during the same months in previous years at a set of approximately 90 sites from across the UK. These sites are depicted on the two maps. Years with observed flows that most closely resemble current conditions are identified as the best analogues and the outlook is based on extrapolating from current conditions based on these analogues.

It is, however, often the case that a simpler forecast based on the persistence of river flow provides a better forecast than provided by analogy. This is particularly true for slowly responding catchments associated with aquifer outcrops.

Both methods are considered at each site and the forecast from the method with the higher confidence is presented. A simple classification of flows is used (high, medium and low) as indicated by the colours of the dots, with the confidence of the forecast being represented by the size of the dot. A tag on the dot indicates which method has been used in each instance.

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UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

Outlook based on hydrological persistence and analogy

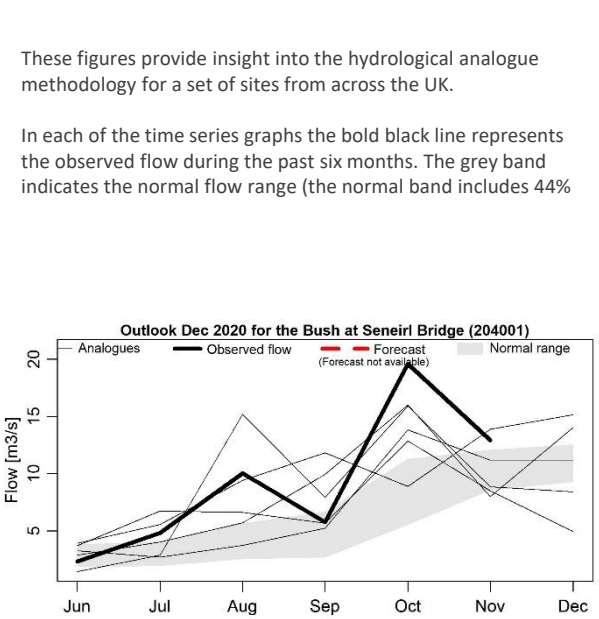
Site-based: 1 month outlook

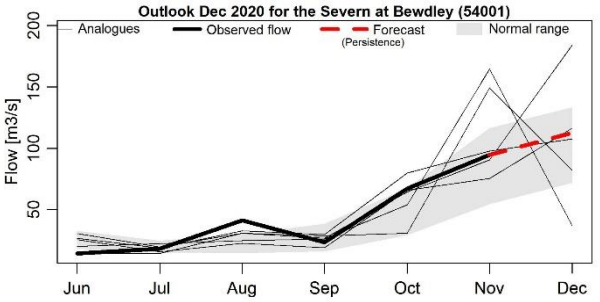
Period: December 2020

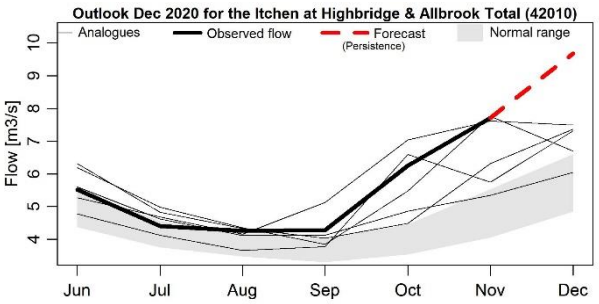
Issued on 04.12.2020 using data to the end of November 2020

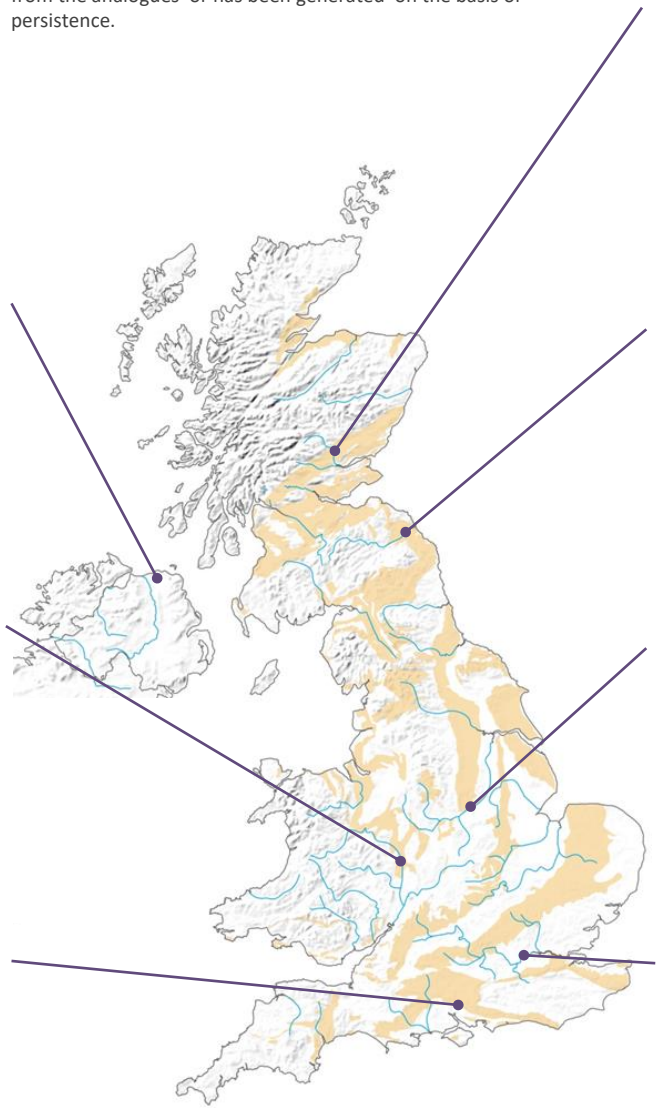
These figures provide insight into the hydrological analogue methodology for a set of sites from across the UK.

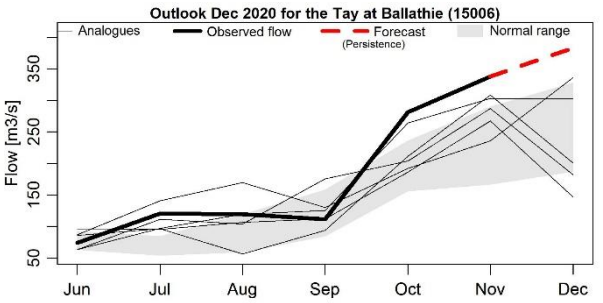
In each of the time series graphs the bold black line represents the observed flow during the past six months. The grey band indicates the normal flow range (the normal band includes 44% of observed flows in each month). The selected analogues are shown as thin lines and the trajectories that flows took in the following month are also shown. The forecast is shown as the dashed red line, and in each plot it states whether this has come from the analogues or has been generated on the basis of persistence.

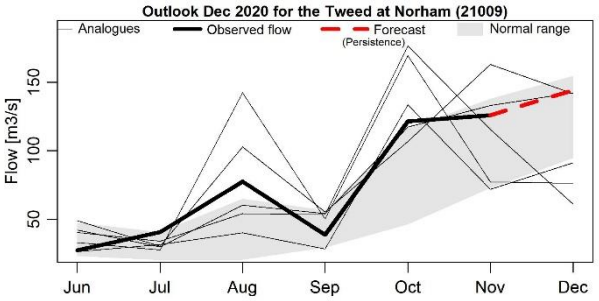


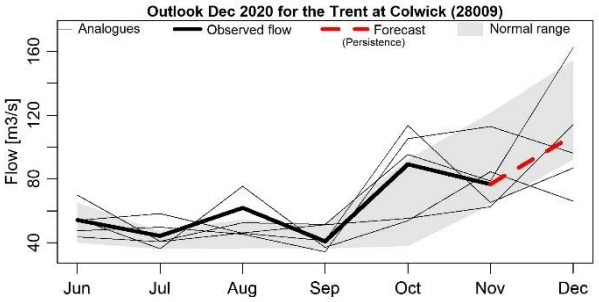


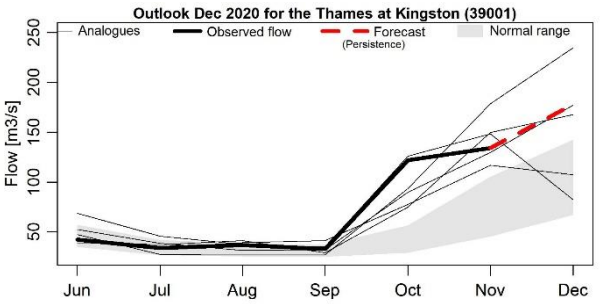












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RIVER FLOW ANALOGY

December 2020

UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

Outlook based on hydrological persistence and analogy

Site-based: 3 month outlook

Period: December – February 2021

Issued on 04.12.2020 using data to the end of November 2020

These figures provide insight into the hydrological analogue methodology for a set of sites from across the UK.

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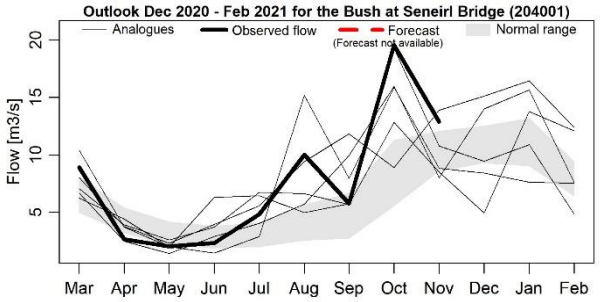

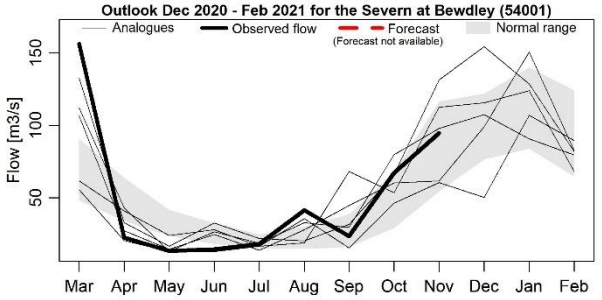

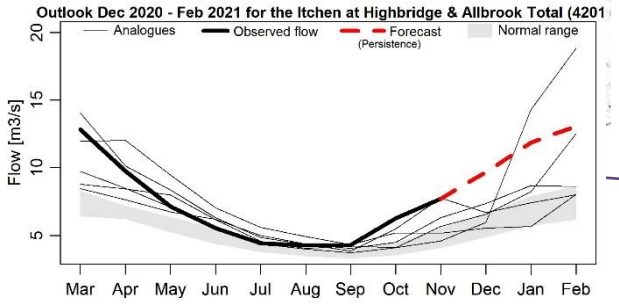

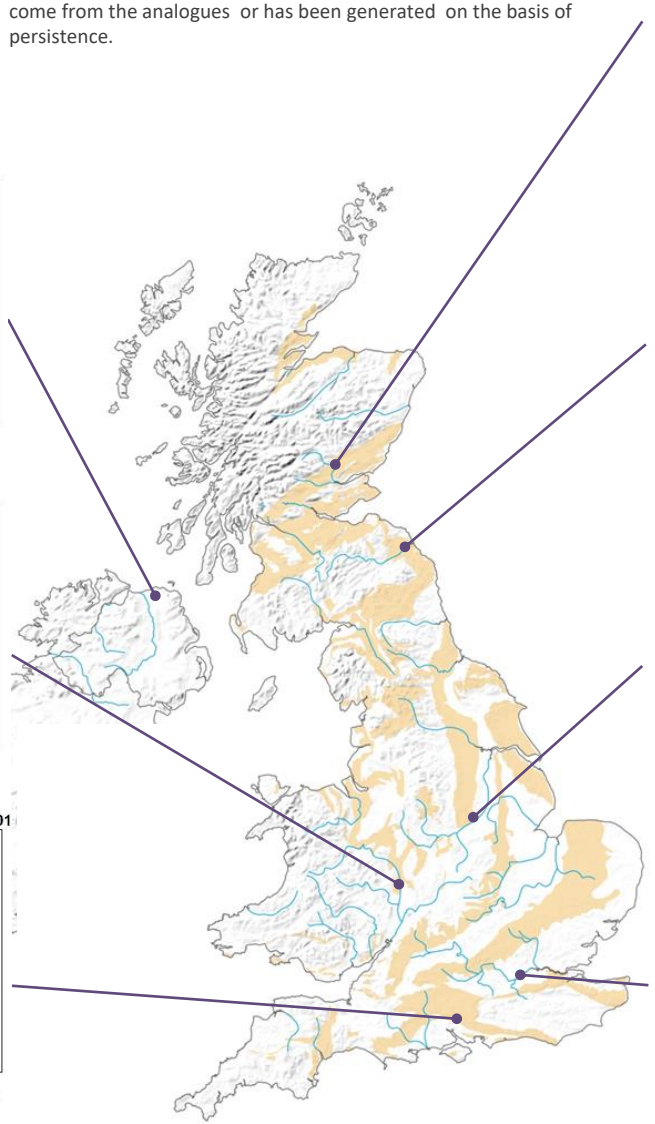

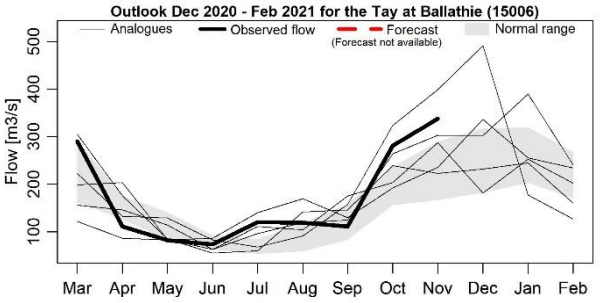

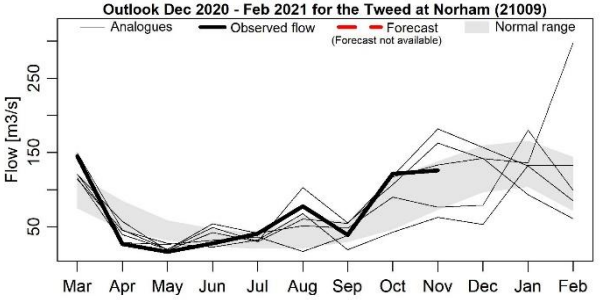

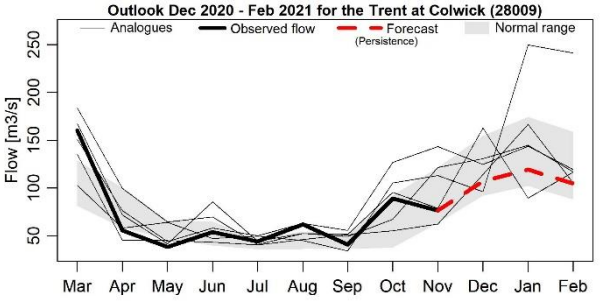

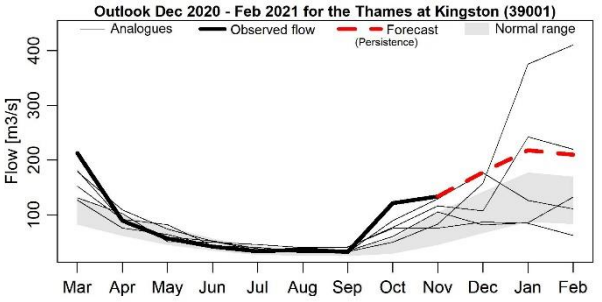

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RIVER FLOW ANALOGY

December 2020

UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

British Geological Survey

Environment Agency

Outlook based on modelled flow from historical climate

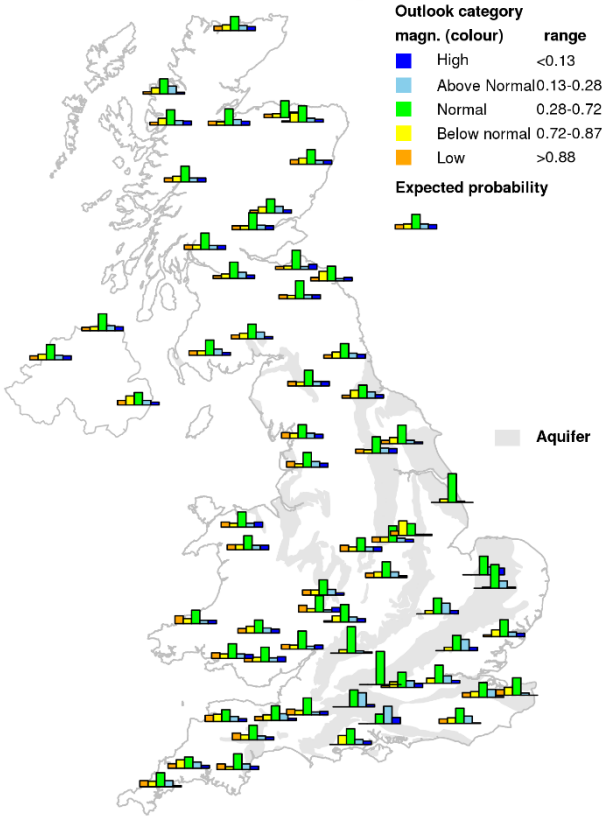
Overview

Period: December 2020 – May 2021

Issued on 02.12.2020 using data to the end of November

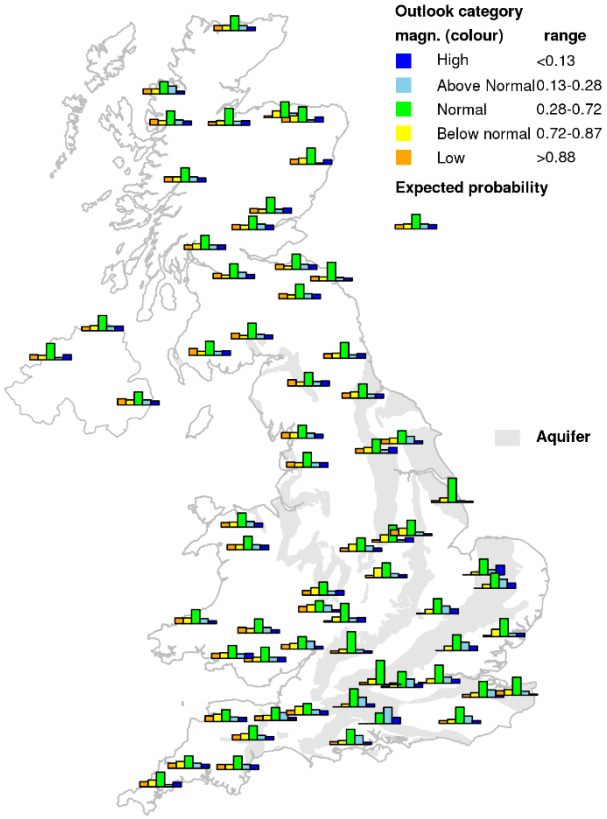
River flows are likely to be normal to above normal in the south-east, and normal elsewhere. Normal flows are likely to persist over the next 3 months.

1-month river flow outlook starting Dec 2020



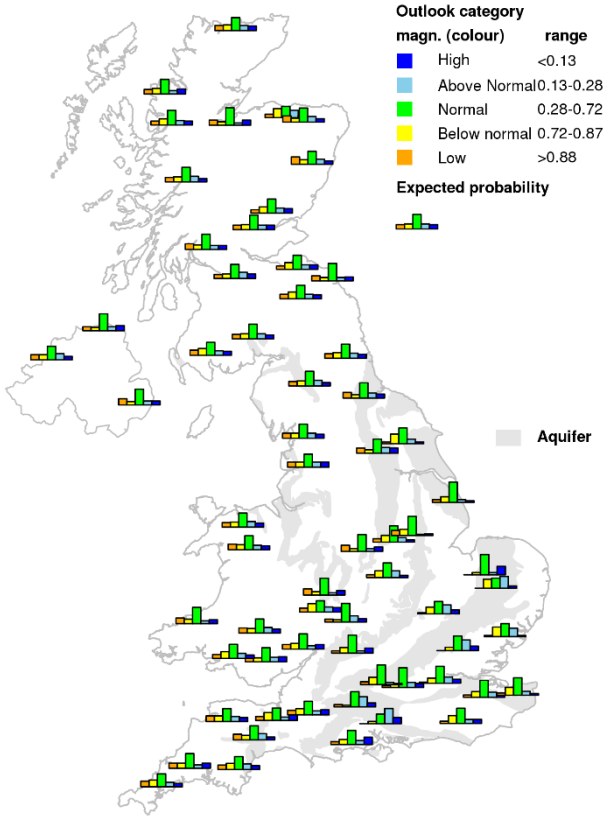
This outlook is based on monthly ensembles of historical sequences of observed climate (rainfall and potential evapotranspiration) that form input to a hydrological model. The outputs are probabilistic simulations of the average river flow over the forecast period (1 to 12 months ahead), at each location. The simulations are generated by the GR4J conceptual rainfall-runoff model from IRSTEA (France) calibrated on observed or naturalised flows.

3-month river flow outlook starting Dec 2020



The bar plot maps show the outlook distribution for 3, 6 and 12-month period for 64 catchments across England and Wales. Each bar plot represents the probabilistic distribution of the simulated river flow compared to the historical river flow, for the same n-month period. The probabilities fall within five categories, classified as: low, below normal, normal, above normal and high.

6-month river flow outlook starting Dec 2020



This outlook is based entirely on historical sequences and therefore does not contain any knowledge of the state of the atmosphere and ocean. It is hence possible that some of the historical sequences used might be inconsistent with current large-scale atmospheric conditions and would therefore be unlikely to occur in the next few months.

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UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

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Environment Agency

Outlook based on modelled flow from historical climate

Overview

This outlook is based on monthly ensembles of historical sequences of observed climate (rainfall and potential evapotranspiration) that form input to a hydrological model. The outputs are probabilistic simulations of the average river flow over the forecast period (1 to 12 months ahead), at each location. The simulations are generated by the GR4J conceptual rainfall-runoff model from IRSTEA (France) calibrated on observed or naturalised flows.

The stack diagrams show the variation over time of the outlook distribution for a number of individual catchments. Each graph represents variation over time of the number of simulated river flows, in each month ensemble, that fall within each of seven categories: exceptionally low, notably low, below normal, normal, above normal, notably high and exceptionally high. The categories represent cumulative flow conditions, e.g. For 3-month, the simulated total 3-month flow compared to the historical 3-month flow distribution. The monthly variations can be compared to the long-term average distribution of river flows (shown as columns on the right of each timeline graph).

This outlook is based entirely on historical sequences and therefore does not contain any knowledge of the state of the atmosphere and ocean. It is hence possible that some of the historical sequences used might be inconsistent with current large-scale atmospheric conditions and would therefore be unlikely to occur in the next few months.

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RIVER FLOW FROM HISTORICAL CLIMATE

December 2020

UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

Met Office

Environment Agency

Outlook based on modelled flow from North Atlantic Oscillation historical climate analogues

New Winter NAO analogue forecasts – In Development

Period: December 2020 – February 2021
Issued on 06.12.2020 using data to the end of November

This page shows the results of the GR4J hydrological model run using historical climate analogues, resampled according to the forecast North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO) index. Please see the next page for details on the method.

Global weather patterns can affect UK weather during the coming season and their influence acts to shift the chances of the categories in the Outlook. For December-January-February, among other drivers, a moderate to strong La Nina is likely to affect the latter part of the winter. An increased chance of mild westerly winds means a greater likelihood of Atlantic weather systems bringing impacts from wet, windy or even stormy conditions.

Dec-Jan-Feb Precipitation anomaly (Northwest UK)

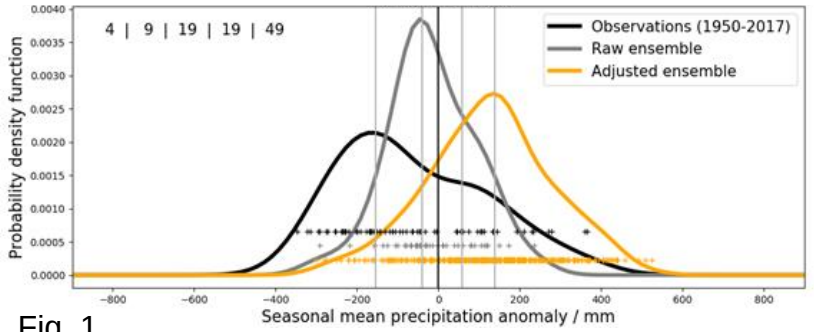

Fig. 1

River flows are likely to be above normal in the northern and western parts of the UK, as well as in parts of southern England. Flows in central and south-eastern England are likely to be within the normal range.

Dec-Jan-Feb 2020 NAO Driven River Flow Outlook

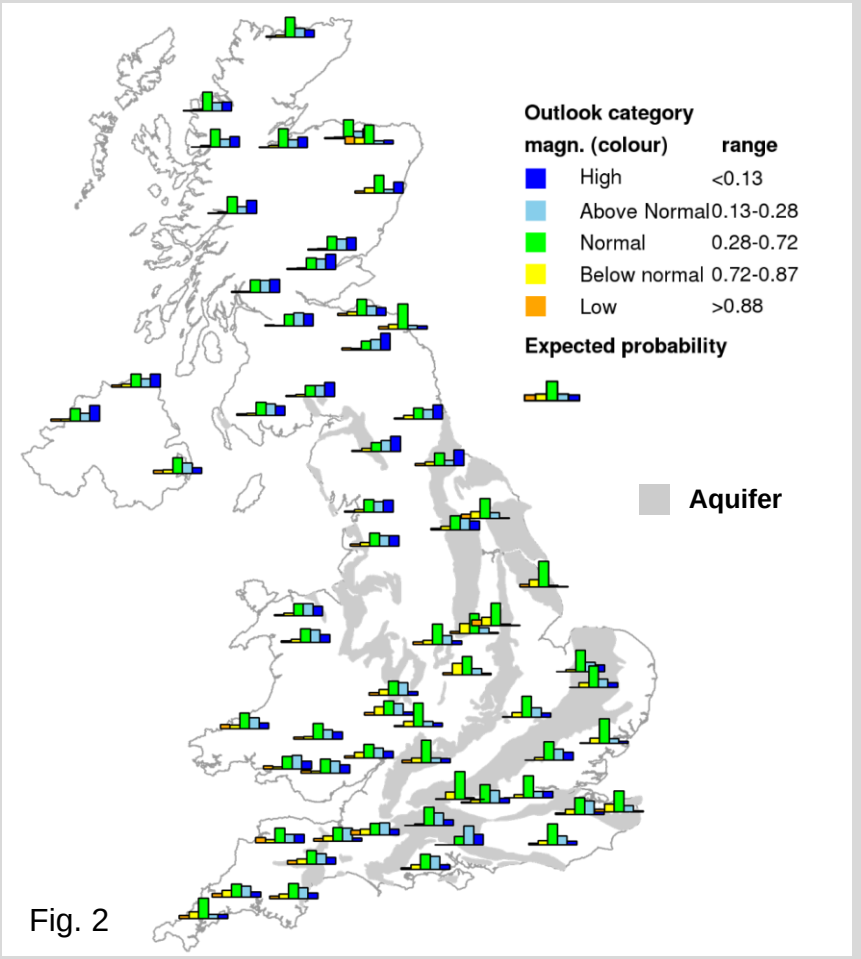

Fig. 2

This outlook is based on ensembles of historical sequences of observed climate (rainfall and potential evapotranspiration), resampled according to the NAO index, that form input to a hydrological model. The outputs are the likelihoods of different outcomes for the average river flow over the three month winter forecast period at each location. The simulations are generated by the GR4J conceptual rainfall-runoff model calibrated on observed flows.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of individual outcomes (shown as crosses) and the consequent likelihood of different amounts of precipitation in the Northwest UK (as a difference from the long-term average). The black line shows the likelihood based only on past climate, using observations from 1950-2017. The grey line shows the output from the Met Office GloSea long-range prediction system. The orange line shows the GloSea outputs adjusted to correct for known under-prediction of the size of weather signals. The numbers in the top left represent the percentage of adjusted outcomes that fall into five categories that are equally likely based on the observational climate distribution (shown by the vertical grey lines on the graph).

Figure 2 shows the outlook distribution for 64 catchments across England and Wales. Each bar plot represents the likelihood of the simulated river flow compared to the historical river flow, for the same n-month period. The probabilities fall within five categories, classified as: low, below normal, normal, above normal and high.

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UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

Met Office

Environment Agency

Outlook based on modelled flow from North Atlantic Oscillation historical climate analogues

The North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO) is a measure of the strength and frequency of westerly winds across the UK and can be a strong driver of winter precipitation, especially in the north and western parts of the UK. This directly influences river flows in the highly responsive catchments in this area. Including the NAO forecast in winter hydrological predictions significantly improves the skill of the forecast in many UK catchments.

NAO historical climate analogues Method

Rescale 42 NAO forecasts to correct under-prediction of NAO variability

↓

Take each adjusted forecast value of DJF average NAO

↓

Find a non-consecutive DJF sequence where average observed NAO = forecast value

e.g. December 1992, January 2003, February 1965

↓

Repeat 10 times per NAO forecast = 420 analogue date sequences

↓

Extract catchment averaged rainfall and PET for each sequence

↓

Run each data sequence through GR4J as a DJF forecasts

Continuous Ranked Probability Skill Score (CRPSS) for December-January-February flow hindcasts

compared to a flow climatology baseline

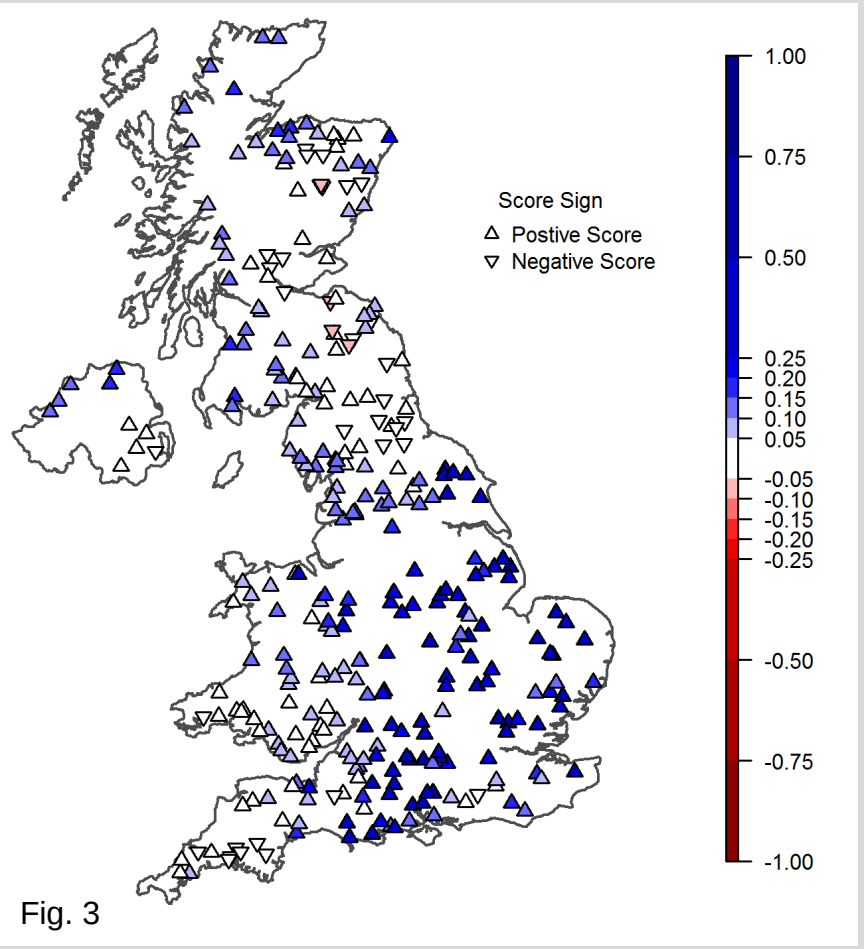

Fig. 3

The NAO analogue forecasts are run in a very similar way to the historical climate forecasts, however they make use of North Atlantic Oscillation forecasts. NAO forecasts are extracted from the Met Office GloSea long-range prediction system and are rescaled to correct known under-prediction of NAO variability. Ten sequences of historic dates with similar NAO index values are then sought for each climate forecast member. See Stringer et al., 2020 for further detail. https://doi.org/10.1175/JAMC-D-19-0094.1).

The GR4J hydrological model is run using observational precipitation and potential evapotranspiration data up to the point of initialisation. Rather than using each historic year as climate input, as with the historical climate forecasts, the non-sequential date sequences identified using the NAO index forecasts are instead used to extract non-sequential historic precipitation and potential evapotranspiration data. These data are then used as input to the hydrological model to run in forecast mode.

Figure 3 shows the continuous ranked probability skill score (CRPSS) in the NAO analogue river flow hindcasts when compared to observations, calculated over the hindcast period 1994-2016. Blue arrows pointing upward show improvement in forecast skill when compared to a flow climatology baseline. Skill in the south-east is known to be due to the persistence of flows, and is seen in the standard historical climate forecasts. Skill in the north and west shown on this map however, is additional skill achieved by utilising the NAO index forecasts.

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UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

Current Daily Simulated Subsurface Water Storage Conditions

Based on subsurface water storage estimated for 30th November 2020

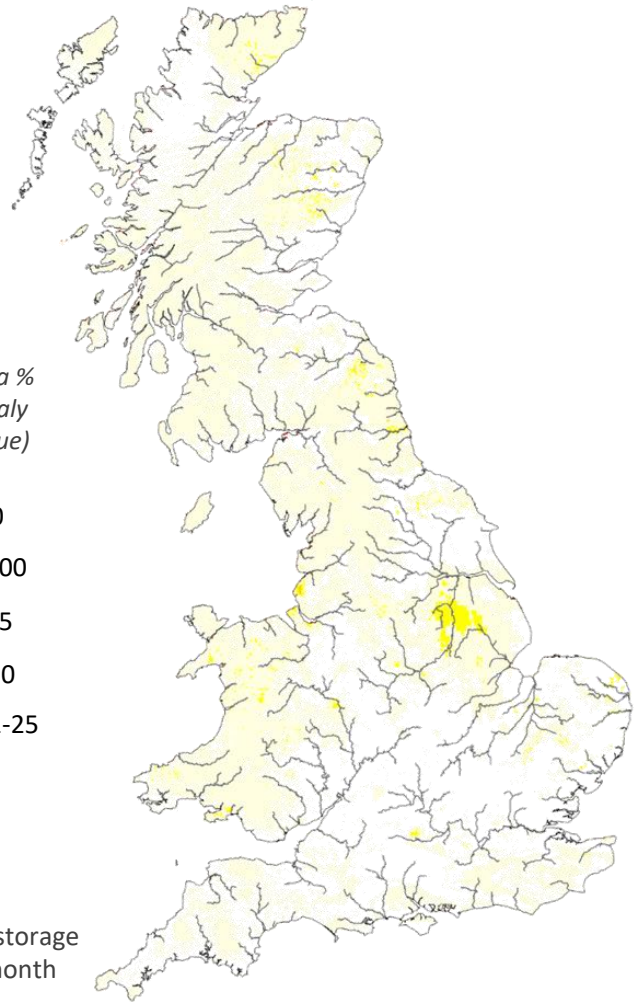
Issue date: 03.12.2020

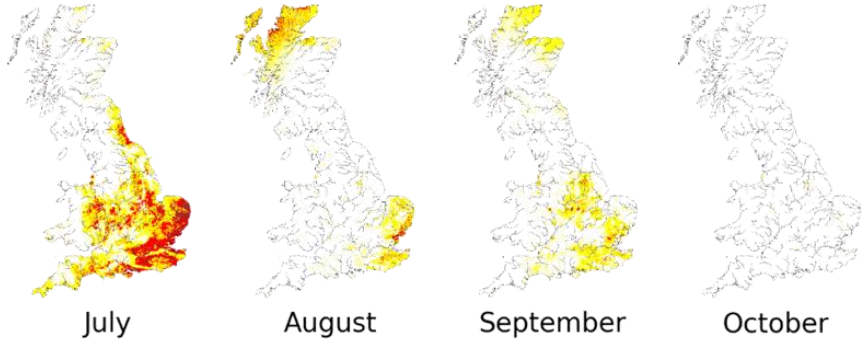
These maps are based on Grid-to-Grid (G2G) hydrological model simulated subsurface water storage, expressed as an anomaly from the historical monthly mean. To highlight areas that are particularly wet or dry, the storage anomaly is presented here using a colour scale highlighting water storage relative to historical extremes. The maps below show relative dryness.

These maps do not provide a drought forecast and are not maps of soil moisture. Instead they indicate areas where subsurface water storage approaches or exceeds its historical minimum. A lack of rainfall in the high 'relative dryness' areas could lead to (or prolong) a drought.

SUMMARY: At the end of November, the subsurface water levels across much of the country are close to the values expected for this time of the year.

Relative Dryness

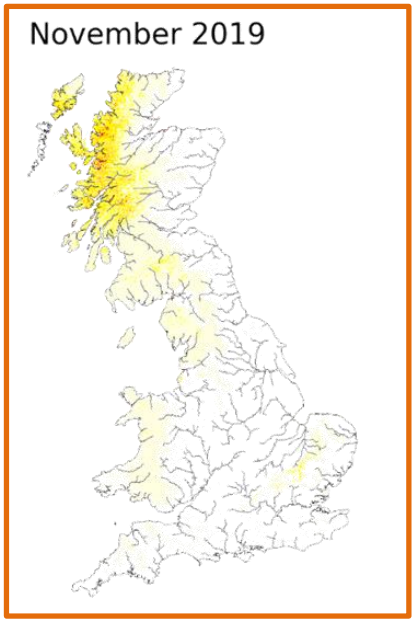


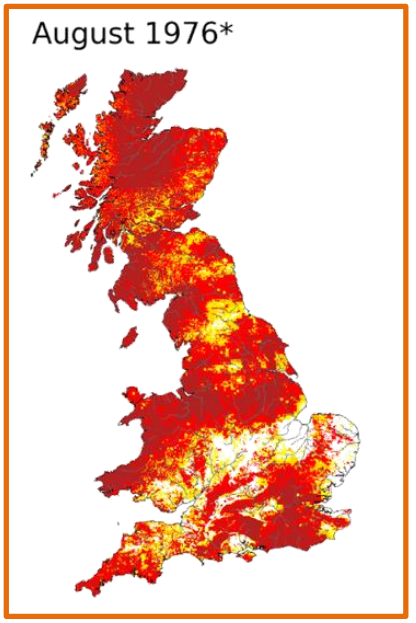


Water storage anomaly as a % of minimum storage anomaly (zero indicates average value)

High (very dry)		>100
		75-100
Medium		50-75
		25-50
Low		0.01-25
(No dryness)		<0
Main rivers		

Labels refer to estimated storage on *final day* of named month





*Example month displaying extreme relative dryness

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UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

Current Daily Simulated Subsurface Water Storage Conditions

Based on subsurface water storage estimated for 30th November 2020

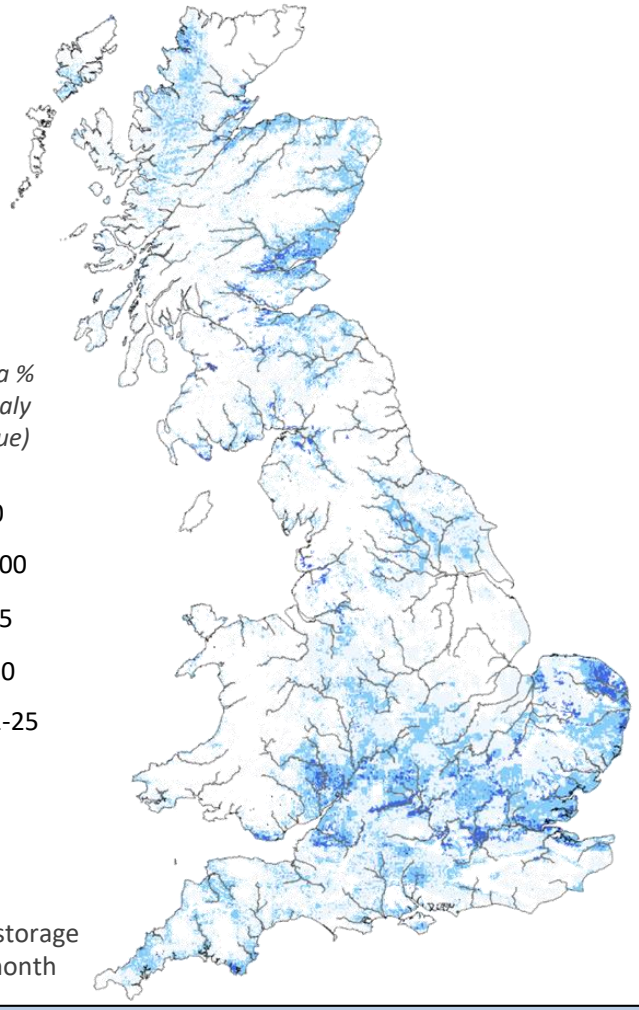
Issue date: 03.12.2020

These maps are based on Grid-to-Grid (G2G) hydrological model simulated subsurface water storage, expressed as an anomaly from the historical monthly mean. To highlight areas that are particularly wet or dry, the storage anomaly is presented here using a colour scale highlighting water storage relative to historical extremes. The maps below show relative wetness.

These maps do not provide a flood forecast and are not maps of soil moisture. Instead they indicate areas where subsurface water storage approaches or exceeds its historical maximum. Rainfall in the high 'relative wetness' areas could result in flooding.

SUMMARY: At the end of November, the subsurface water levels across much of the country are close to the values expected for this time of the year. Scattered areas are somewhat wetter than expected for November (medium relative wetness), including patches across central and eastern England and eastern Scotland.

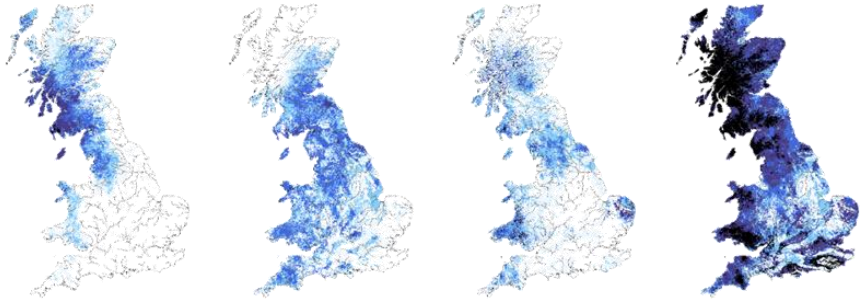
Relative Wetness

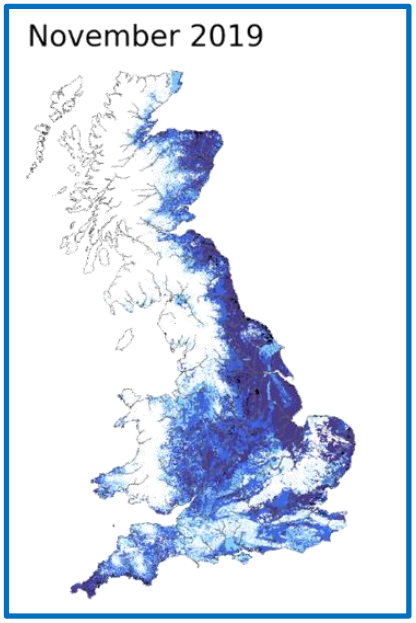


Water storage anomaly as a % of maximum storage anomaly (zero indicates average value)

High (very wet)		>100
		75-100
Medium		50-75
		25-50
Low		0.01-25
(No wetness)		<0
Main rivers		

Labels refer to estimated storage on *final day* of named month





*Example month displaying extreme relative wetness

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OUTLOOK BASED ON CURRENT CONDITIONS

December 2020

UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

Current Daily Simulated Subsurface Water Storage Conditions

Relative Dryness

- The relative dryness map highlights areas where current estimates of **subsurface water storage** (from the G2G hydrological model, calculated for the last day of last month) are particularly ***low***.
- The map indicates areas where the ground is dry compared to the monthly **average** storage (for the period 1981 to 2010), and shows this relative to the historical **minimum** storage level (for 1971 to 2010).
- Relative dryness calculation: $R_d\,(\%) = \dfrac{(S_{average} - S)}{(S_{average} - S_{min})} \times 100$

  $= \dfrac{\text{(average storage for this month - storage at end of last month)}}{\text{(average storage for this month - historical minimum storage)}} \times 100$
- A value of $\boldsymbol{R_d = 100}$ shows that a region is very dry, and indicates that the storage is as low as the minimum value ever estimated by the model for this month.
- A value of $\boldsymbol{R_d = 0}$ indicates that the storage in the region matches the monthly average value. *Negative relative dryness values will show up as part of the relative wetness map.*
- The map **does not provide a drought forecast**. A lack of rainfall in the high 'relative dryness' areas **could** lead to (or prolong) a drought.

Relative Wetness

- The relative wetness map highlights areas where current estimates of **subsurface water storage** (from the G2G hydrological model, calculated for the last day of last month) are particularly ***high***.
- The map indicates areas where the ground is wet compared to the monthly **average** storage (for the period 1981 to 2010), and shows this relative to the historical **maximum** storage level (for 1971 to 2010).
- Relative wetness calculation: $R_w\,(\%) = \dfrac{(S - S_{average})}{(S_{max} - S_{average})} \times 100$

  $= \dfrac{\text{(storage at end of last month - average storage for this month)}}{\text{(historical maximum storage - average storage for this month)}} \times 100$
- A value of $\boldsymbol{R_w = 100}$ shows that a region is very wet, and indicates that the storage is as high as the maximum value ever estimated by the model for this month.
- A value of $\boldsymbol{R_w = 0}$ indicates that the storage in the region matches the monthly average value. *Negative relative wetness values will show up as part of the relative dryness map.*
- The map **does not provide a flood forecast**. Rainfall in the high 'relative wetness' areas **could** result in flooding.

UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

Return Period of Rainfall Required to Overcome the Dry Conditions

Period: December 2020 – May 2021

Issue date: 03.12.2020

These maps show the **return period** of the rainfall required to overcome dry conditions simulated using the Grid-to-Grid (G2G) hydrological model. The maps are coloured according to the return period of accumulated rainfall required to overcome the estimated current subsurface water storage deficit over the next few months.

These maps do not provide a drought forecast. Instead they indicate the return period of rainfall required to overcome the dry conditions for the following 6 months based on current conditions.

SUMMARY: During December to May, Britain will not require particularly unusual rainfall (<5 year return periods) to return to average conditions for the time of year.

Dec

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Rainfall amount / Probability			*Return period (years)*
Low (this rain is likely to occur)	> 20%		< 5
	< 20%		5 - 10
	< 10%		10 - 25
	< 4%		25 - 50
High (less likely)	< 2%		50 - 100
	< 1%		100 - 200
Extreme (unlikely but still possible)	< 0.5%		>200

SCOTLAND

HR	Highlands Region
NER	North East Region
TR	Tay Region
FR	Forth Region
CR	Clyde Region
TWR	Tweed Region
SR	Solway Region

ENGLAND

N	Northumbria
NW	North West
Y	Yorkshire
ST	Severn Trent
A	Anglian
T	Thames
S	Southern
W	Wessex
SW	South West

WALES

WEL	Welsh

NORTHERN IRELAND

This method cannot currently be used in Northern Ireland

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OUTLOOK BASED ON CURRENT CONDITIONS

December 2020

Return Period of Rainfall Required to Overcome the Dry Conditions

Method

- These maps show the **return period** of the rainfall required to overcome dry conditions simulated using the Grid-to-Grid (G2G) hydrological model. The maps are coloured according to the return period of rainfall required to overcome the estimated current subsurface water storage deficit.

- For **dry areas** within a Hydrological Outlook region, i.e. where subsurface water storage anomaly < 0, we estimate ***regional average subsurface water storage deficit*** *(mm)* from the last day of the most recent G2G model run.

- For each region we also estimate the ***regional monthly average rainfall total*** *(mm)* (for the period 1971-2000).

- For each of the next 6 months, we estimate the rainfall total (including what is normally expected for each month) required to overcome the dry conditions.
  - To overcome the dry conditions by the end of month 1:
    rainfall required (mm) = regional monthly average rainfall for month 1 + regional average storage deficit
  - To overcome the dry conditions by the end of month 2 (more likely):
    rainfall required (mm) = regional monthly average rainfall for months 1 and 2 + regional average storage deficit
  - To overcome the dry conditions by the end of month *n* (likely):
    rainfall required (mm) = regional monthly average rainfall for months 1 to *n* + regional average storage deficit

- Using Tabony tables we estimate the return period of the ***rainfall required*** in each region and over the next 1 to 6 months to overcome the dry conditions.

- The return period results are displayed as regional maps with the colour scale based on the return period (years) of the rainfall required to replenish subsurface stores over the next 1, 2, .., 6 months ahead.

- Note: These maps do not provide a drought forecast. Instead they indicate the return period of rainfall required to overcome the dry conditions for the following 6 months based on current conditions.

UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

Estimate of Additional Rainfall Required to Overcome Dry Conditions

Based on subsurface water storage estimated for 30th November 2020

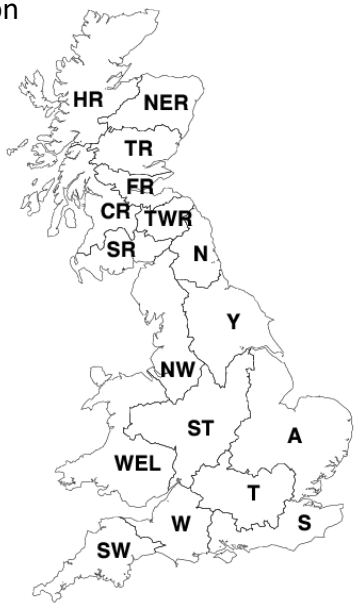
Issue date: 03.12.2020

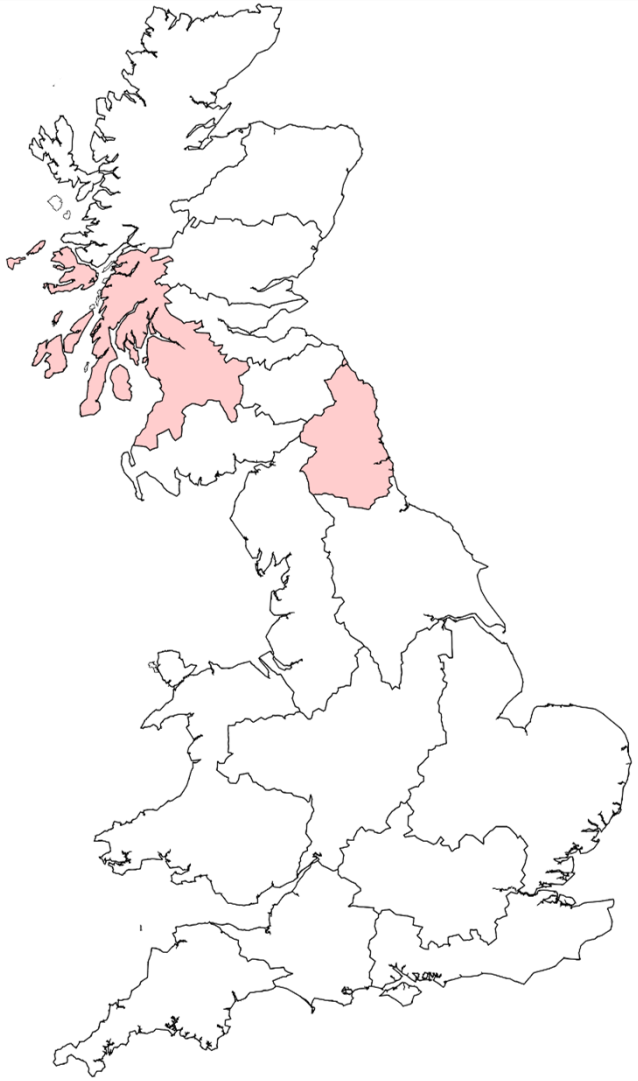
These maps show the Grid-to-Grid (G2G) hydrological model simulated subsurface water storage, expressed as an anomaly from the historical monthly mean (1981-2010), presented on a 1km grid and as regional means.
Subsurface storage deficits, i.e. where the subsurface water storage anomaly is less than zero, **are highlighted by the red/pink colours**.

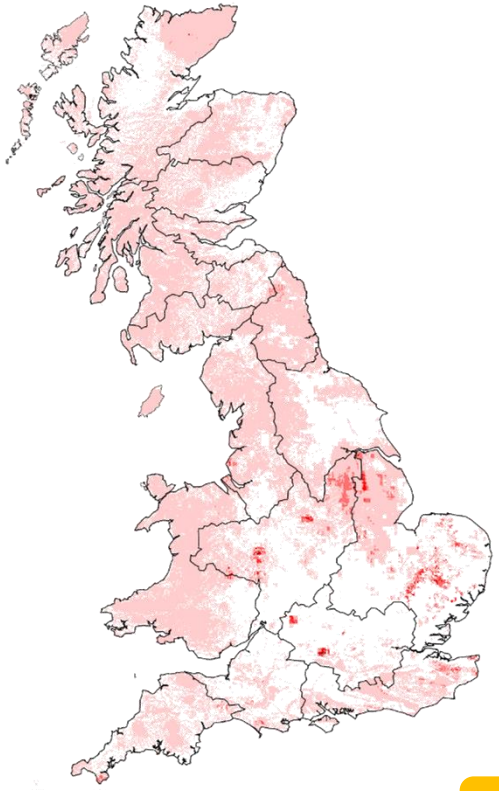
The **subsurface storage deficit (mm)** can be interpreted as an estimate of additional rainfall that would be required in future months to overcome dry conditions (i.e. rainfall in addition to what is expected on average). Regional mean values of additional rainfall required are provided in the table below.

Regional estimate of additional rainfall required (mm)

	SCOTLAND	
0	HR	Highlands Region
0	NER	North East Region
0	TR	Tay Region
0	FR	Forth Region
1	CR	Clyde Region
0	TWR	Tweed Region
0	SR	Solway Region
	ENGLAND	
3	N	Northumbria
0	NW	North West
0	Y	Yorkshire
0	ST	Severn Trent
0	A	Anglian
0	T	Thames
0	W	Wessex
0	S	Southern
0	SW	South West
	WALES	
0	WEL	Welsh







Water storage deficit (anomaly, mm)

- >125
- 100-125
- 75-100
- 50-75
- 25-50
- 0.1-25
- <=0

OUTLOOK BASED ON CURRENT CONDITIONS

December 2020

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UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

Outlook Based on Modelled Flow from Rainfall Forecasts

Overview

Period: December 2020 – February 2021

Issued on 03.12.2020 using data to the end of November

SUMMARY: During December, river flows across the country are most likely to be in the *Normal range*.

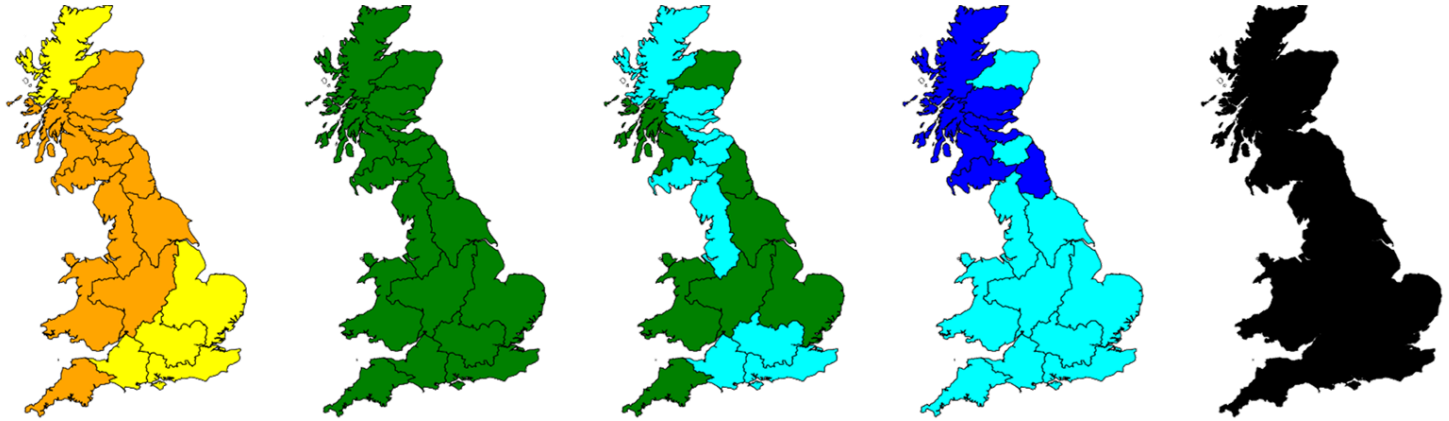
Over the next 3 months river flows across England and Wales are most likely to be in the *Normal range* to *Above normal*, while flows across Scotland are likely to be *Above normal* or higher.

1-month flow outlook

Lowest rainfall forecast | *1st quartile* | *Median* | *3rd quartile* | *Highest rainfall forecast*

3-month flow outlook

Lowest rainfall forecast | *1st quartile* | *Median* | *3rd quartile* | *Highest rainfall forecast*



These forecasts are produced by using five members of the Met Office rainfall forecast ensemble as input to a water balance hydrological model to provide the five estimates of river flows shown on the left for one month and three months ahead.

Regional forecast monthly-mean river flows are derived from the average of 1km river flow estimates within each region and ranked in terms of 54 years of historical flow estimates (1963 – 2016).

The five maps illustrate the wide range of possible flows and while there is a 50% chance of flows between the 1st and 3rd quartiles, actual flows may be more extreme than the flows derived using the highest or lowest rainfall forecasts.

Key	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

SCOTLAND

HR	Highlands Region
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CR	Clyde Region
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SR	Solway Region

ENGLAND

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NW	North West
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A	Anglian
T	Thames
S	Southern
W	Wessex
SW	South West

WALES

WEL	Welsh

NORTHERN IRELAND

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RIVER FLOW FROM RAINFALL FORECASTS

December 2020

UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

Outlook Based on Modelled Flow from Rainfall Forecasts 1- and 3-month variability

Period: December 2020 – February 2021 Issue date: 03.12.2020

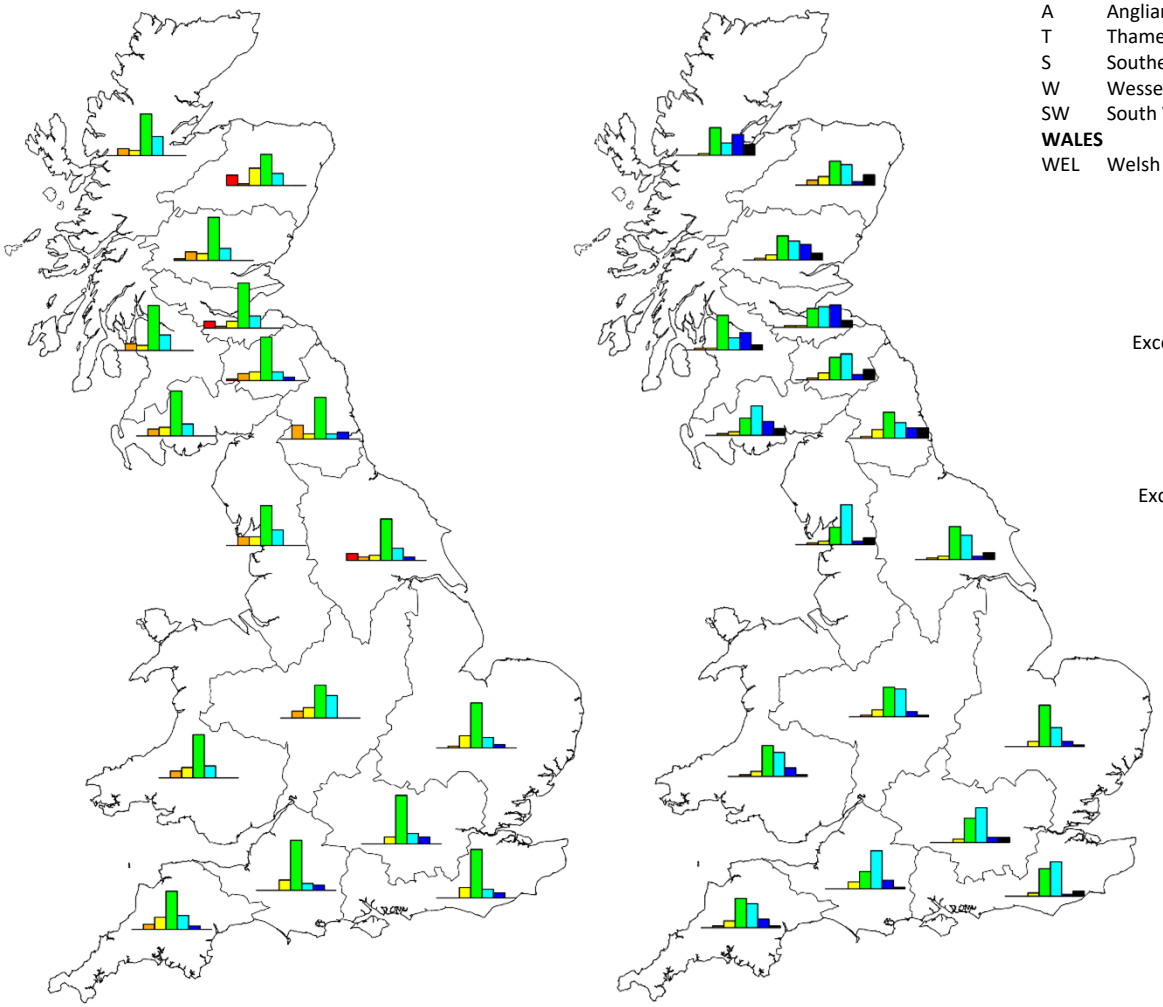
The regional maps illustrating the regional river flows for five members of the Met Office ensemble of rainfall forecasts give some indication of the range of possible river flows in the coming months. As noted previously, the actual flows could be more extreme than the flows generated by either the lowest or highest members of the rainfall ensemble.

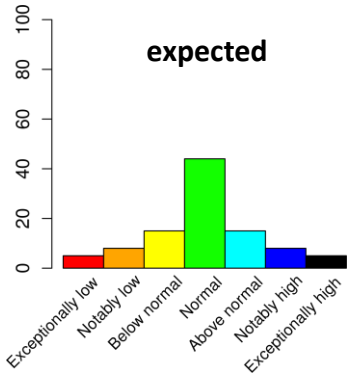
The bar charts (below) give further insight into the range of river flow forecasts by considering all members of the forecast rainfall ensemble. The regional bar charts show the percentage of ensemble forecasts falling in each of the flow categories as generated by the monthly-resolution water-balance model. As before results are averaged by region then ranked in terms of 54 years of historical regional flow estimates (1963 – 2016).

SUMMARY: During December, river flows across the country are most likely to be in the *Normal range*.

Over the next 3 months river flows across England and Wales are most likely to be in the *Normal range* to *Above normal*, while flows across Scotland are likely to be *Above normal* or higher.

1-month *3-month*





SCOTLAND

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The tables below give further insight into the range of river flow forecasts by considering all members of the forecast rainfall ensemble. The numbers in the tables are the percentage of ensemble forecasts falling in each of the flow categories as generated by the monthly-resolution water-balance model. As before results are averaged by region then ranked in terms of 54 years of historical regional flow estimates (1963 – 2016).

SUMMARY: During December, river flows across the country are most likely to be in the *Normal range*.

Over the next 3 months river flows across England and Wales are most likely to be in the *Normal range* to *Above normal*, while flows across Scotland are likely to be *Above normal* or higher.

SCOTLAND
HR Highlands Region
NER North East Region
TR Tay Region
FR Forth Region
CR Clyde Region
TWR Tweed Region
SR Solway Region
ENGLAND
N Northumbria
NW North West
Y Yorkshire
ST Severn Trent
A Anglian
T Thames
S Southern
W Wessex
SW South West
WALES
WEL Welsh

NORTHERN IRELAND
This method cannot currently be used in Northern Ireland

1-month ahead	A	NW	N	ST	SW	S	T	Welsh	W	Y	CR	FR	HR	NER	SR	TR	TWR
Exceptionally high flow	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Notably high flow	5	0	10	0	5	7	10	0	7	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Above normal	14	21	7	31	19	12	14	17	10	17	21	17	26	17	17	17	12
Normal range	62	55	57	45	52	67	67	60	69	57	62	62	57	43	62	60	60
Below normal	17	12	7	14	17	14	10	14	14	7	7	10	7	24	12	10	12
Notably low flow	2	12	19	10	7	0	0	10	0	5	10	2	10	2	10	12	10
Exceptionally low flow	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	10	0	14	0	2	2

3-months ahead	A	NW	N	ST	SW	S	T	Welsh	W	Y	CR	FR	HR	NER	SR	TR	TWR
Exceptionally high flow	2	10	14	2	2	7	7	2	2	10	7	10	14	14	10	10	14
Notably high flow	7	5	14	7	12	2	7	12	12	5	24	31	29	5	19	21	7
Above normal	26	55	21	38	33	48	48	33	52	33	17	29	17	29	40	26	36
Normal range	57	24	36	40	40	38	33	43	24	45	48	26	38	33	24	33	31
Below normal	7	5	12	10	10	5	5	7	10	5	2	2	2	12	5	7	10
Notably low flow	0	2	2	2	2	0	0	2	0	2	2	2	0	7	2	2	2
Exceptionally low flow	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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British Geological Survey

Outlook based on modelled groundwater level & climate forecast

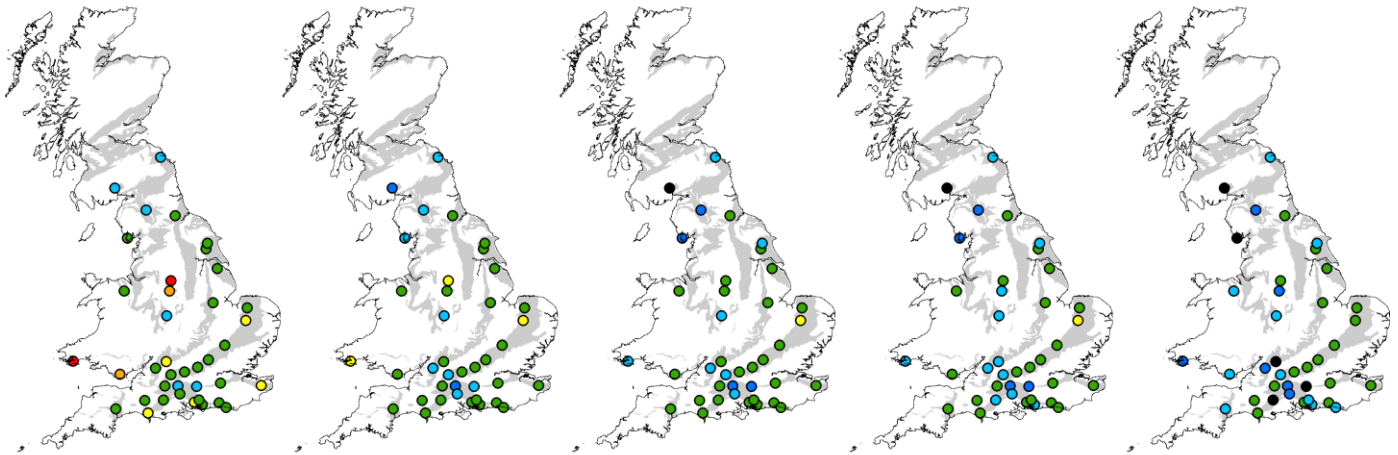
Overview

Period: December 2020 – February 2021

Issued on 09.10.2020 using data to the end of November

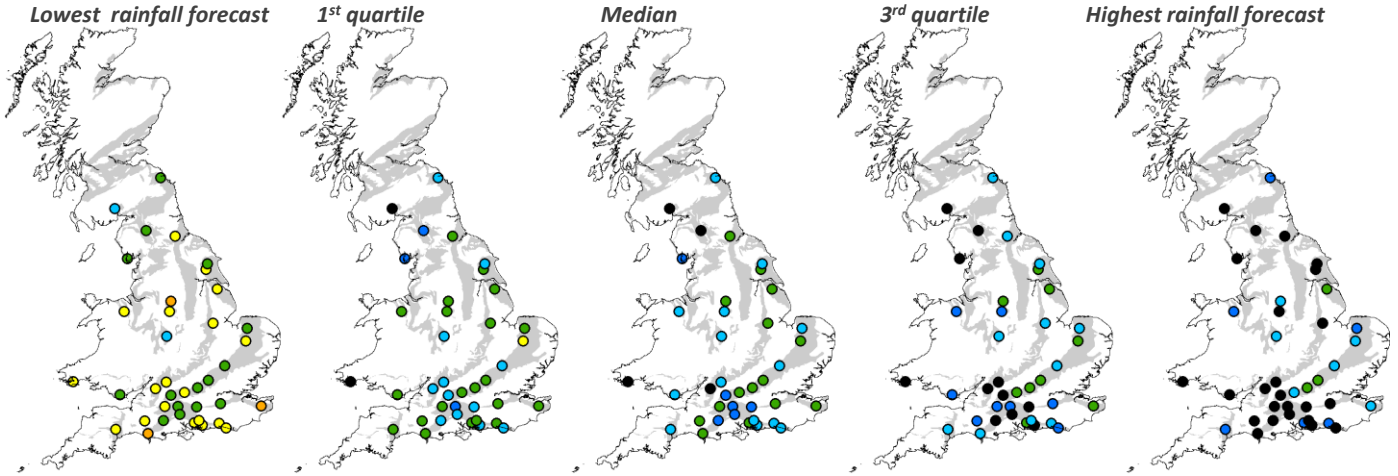
Normal groundwater levels are predicted to prevail across the UK in the 1-month forecast, with some above normal to notably high levels predicted at several sites in the north of England and in the south-western Chalk. In the 3-month forecast, more sites are predicting notably high levels and there are some exceptionally high levels predicted in northern England/southern Scotland, as well as in Wales and the west of England. Note there are a reduced number of modelled sites. This is due to the temporary unavailability of data, where EA staff have been unable to either manually dip boreholes or download logger data as a consequence of Covid-19 restrictions.

Lowest rainfall forecast | *1st quartile* | *Median* | *3rd quartile* | *Highest rainfall forecast*



1-month outlook

Lowest rainfall forecast | *1st quartile* | *Median* | *3rd quartile* | *Highest rainfall forecast*

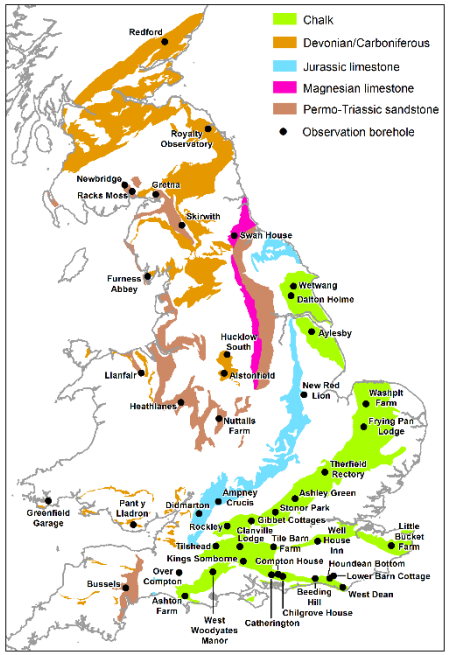


3-month outlook

These forecasts are produced by running five members of the Met Office ensemble climate forecast through groundwater models of observation borehole hydrographs at 42 sites across the country. The sites are distributed across the principal aquifers.

Based on the distribution of observed historical groundwater levels in a given month, seven categories have been derived for each site: very low, low, below normal, normal, above normal, high, and very high. The forecast groundwater level is assigned to one of these seven categories depending on where it falls within the distribution of the historically observed values.

Key	Percentile range of historic observed values for relevant month
Exceptionally high levels	> 95
Notably high levels	87-95
Above normal	72-87
Normal	28-72
Below normal	13-28
Notably low levels	5-13
Exceptionally low levels	< 5



The Hydrological Outlook UK provides an outlook for the water situation for the UK 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

GROUNDWATER FROM CLIMATE FORECASTS

December 2020

UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

British Geological Survey

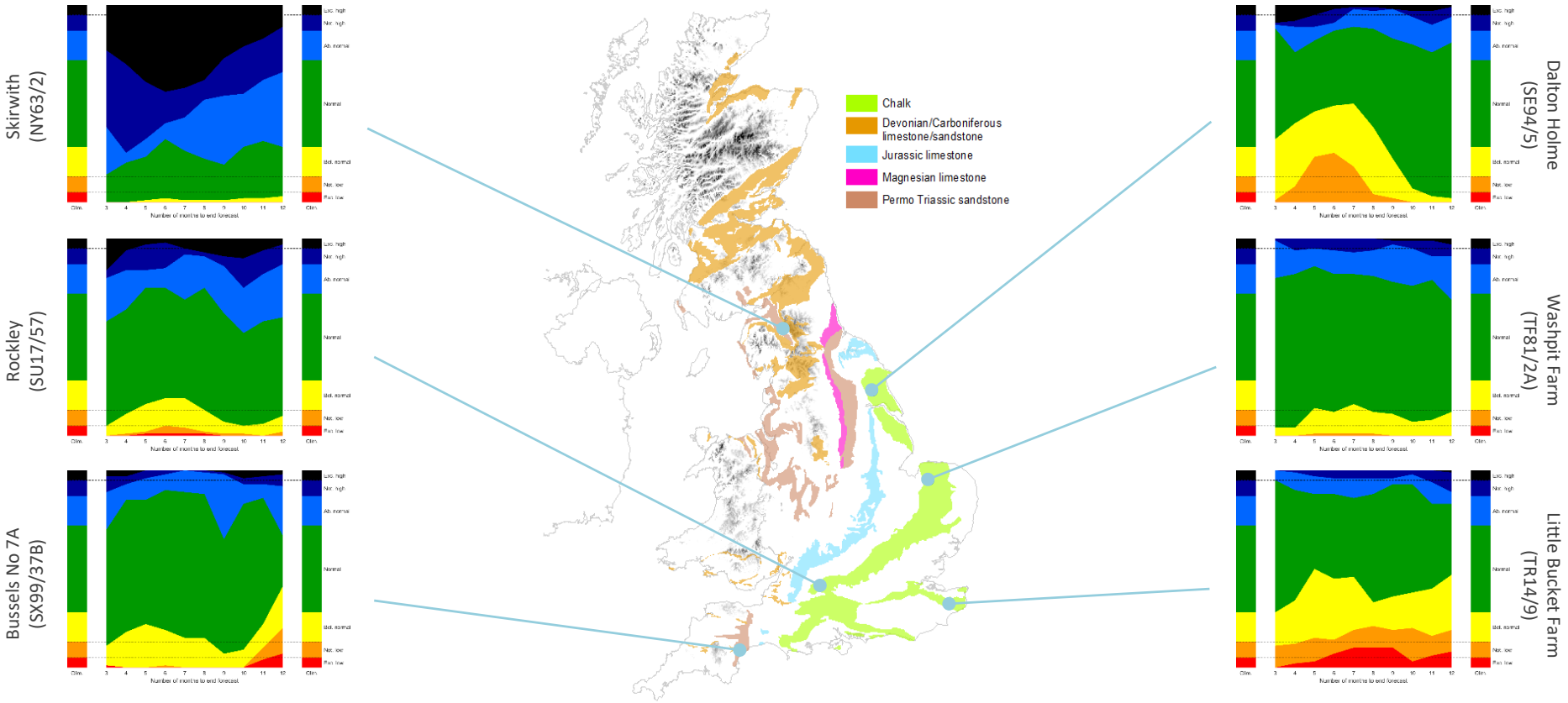
Environment Agency

Outlook based on modelled groundwater from historical climate

Period: December 2020 – November 2021

Issued on 07.12.2020 using data to the end of November

Above normal to notably high levels are predicted in the Permo-Triassic sandstone at Skirwith in North West England over the next 12 months. Elsewhere, levels are predicted to remain normal throughout the period, with some Chalk sites predicting below normal levels over the next 6 months.



This outlook is based on monthly ensembles of historical sequences of observed climate (rainfall and potential evpotranspiration) that form input to hydrological models. The outputs are probabilistic simulations of the average groundwater level over the forecast horizon (3 to 12 months ahead), at each location.

The graphs show variation over time of the number of simulated groundwater levels in each monthly ensemble, that fall within each the seven categories: exceptionally low, notably low, below normal, normal, above normal, notably high and exceptionally high. The monthly variations can be compared to the long-term average distribution of levels, which are shown as columns on the left and right of each graph.

This outlook is based entirely on historical sequences and therefore does not contain any knowledge of the state of the atmosphere and ocean. It is hence possible that some of the historical sequences used might be inconsistent with current large-scale atmospheric conditions and would therefore be unlikely to occur in the next few months.

The Hydrological Outlook UK provides an outlook for the water situation for the UK 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