Monthly water situation report: East Anglia

1 Summary - May 2026

East Anglia rainfall for May 2026 ranged from 28% to 60% of the long term average (LTA) for the month. The soil moisture deficit (SMD) for East Anglia at the end of May 2026 was 99mm with the majority of sites having SMD's between 26mm and 50mm greater than the LTA for the time of year. River flows were below normal, notably low or exceptionally low for the majority of sites. Groundwater levels have decreased across all sites but the majority of monitoring sites are still normal for this time of year. Public water supply reservoirs ended May 2026 with levels ranging from 87% to 92% of their full storage capacities. All reservoirs ended the month with levels below their normal operating curves for this time of year.

1.1 Rainfall

East Anglia received below normal rainfall in May 2026 with some areas experiencing notably low or exceptionally low rainfall. May 2026 rainfall totals across East Anglia ranged from 28% to 60% of the long term average (LTA) for the month. The average rainfall across East Anglia for May 2026 was 19mm, which is 41% of the historic LTA and considered notably low for the time of year. The lowest rainfall totals were recorded in the Cam (13mm) and North Essex (12mm), with these catchments recording exceptionally low rainfall for the time of year. The cumulative rainfall totals over the past 3 months have been exceptionally low for all catchments. Over the past 6 and 12 months the cumulative rainfall totals have been normal in the majority of catchments with 2 catchment areas North Norfolk and North West Norfolk and Wissey recording below normal cumulative rainfall in the last 6 and 12 months.

1.2 Soil moisture deficit and recharge

The soil moisture deficit (SMD) for East Anglia has increased significantly during May 2026, rising from a notably high 66mm at the end of April to an exceptionally high 99mm at the end of May. The majority of catchments have SMD's between 26mm and 50mm greater than the LTA for the time of year. North Norfolk and the Lower Bedford Ouse were the exception with SMD's between 6mm and 25mm greater than the LTA for the time of year. SMD has improved slightly since April 2026 in 2 catchments, North Norfolk and the Lower Bedford Ouse moving from SMD's of 26mm to 50mm above the LTA to 6mm to 25mm above the LTA.

1.3 River flows

Following below average rainfall across East Anglia, the May 2026 month mean flows at the majority of monitoring sites have decreased compared to April 2026. Only two flow sites, Heacham and Burn, have normal flows with the rest of the monitoring sites being below normal, notably low or exceptionally low. Flows range between 29% of the LTA at Waveney to 84% of the LTA at Heacham.

1.4 Groundwater levels

Groundwater levels have begun to fall in half the reporting sites, for which there is data available, for May 2026 compared to April 2026. Most sites are still normal for this time of year. Some sites are below normal with Hindolveston recording notably low groundwater levels for this time of year.

1.5 Reservoir stocks

All public water supply reservoirs for East Anglia have seen a decrease in storage for May 2026. At the end of the month, levels ranged from 87% to 92% of their full storage capacity. All reservoirs ended the month with levels below their respective normal operating curves for this time of year.

Author: Hydrology Team, hydrology-ean-and-lna@environment-agency.gov.uk

*[SMD]: soil moisture deficits

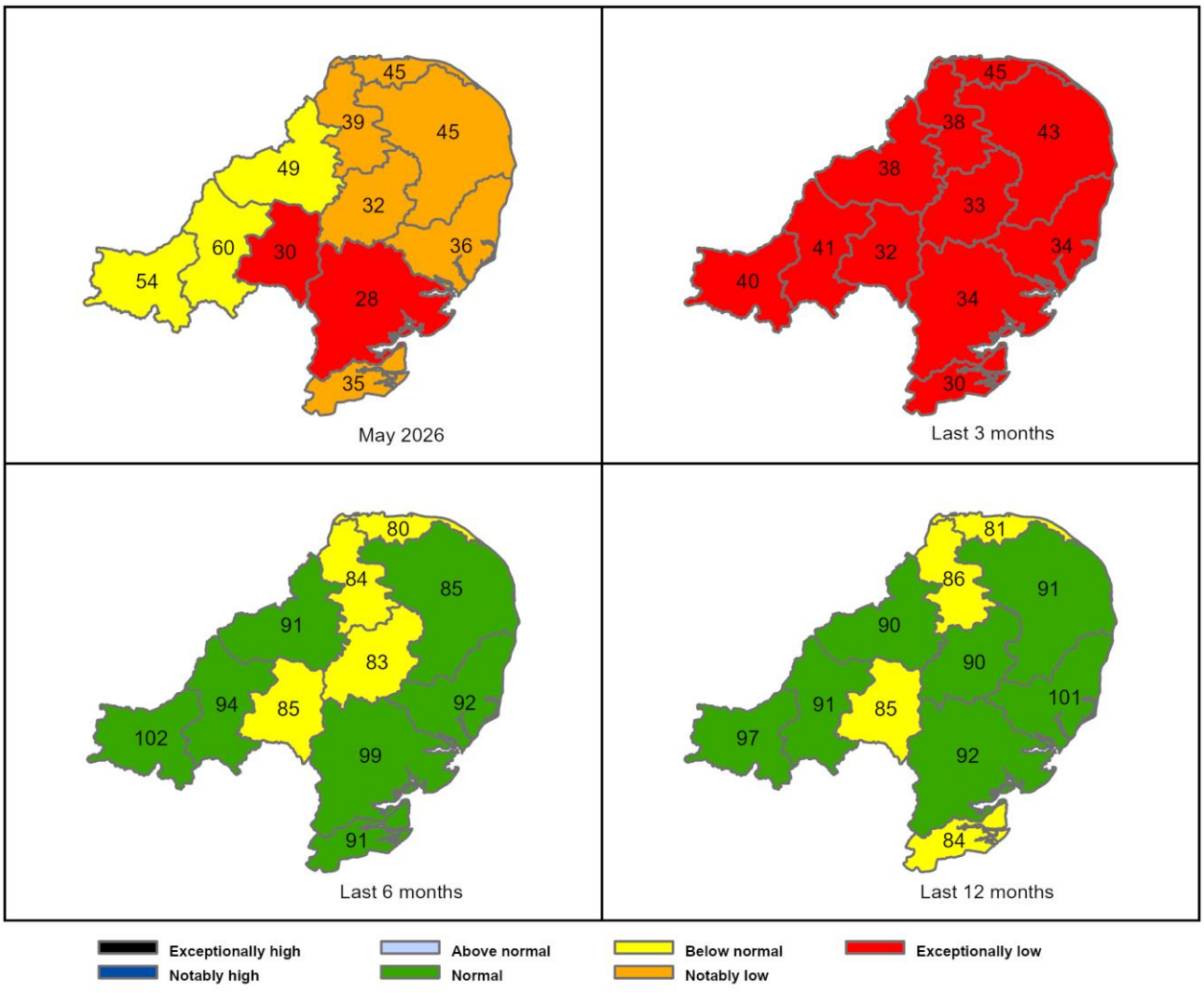
*[LTA]: long term average

Contact Details: 03708 506 506

2 Rainfall

2.1 Rainfall map

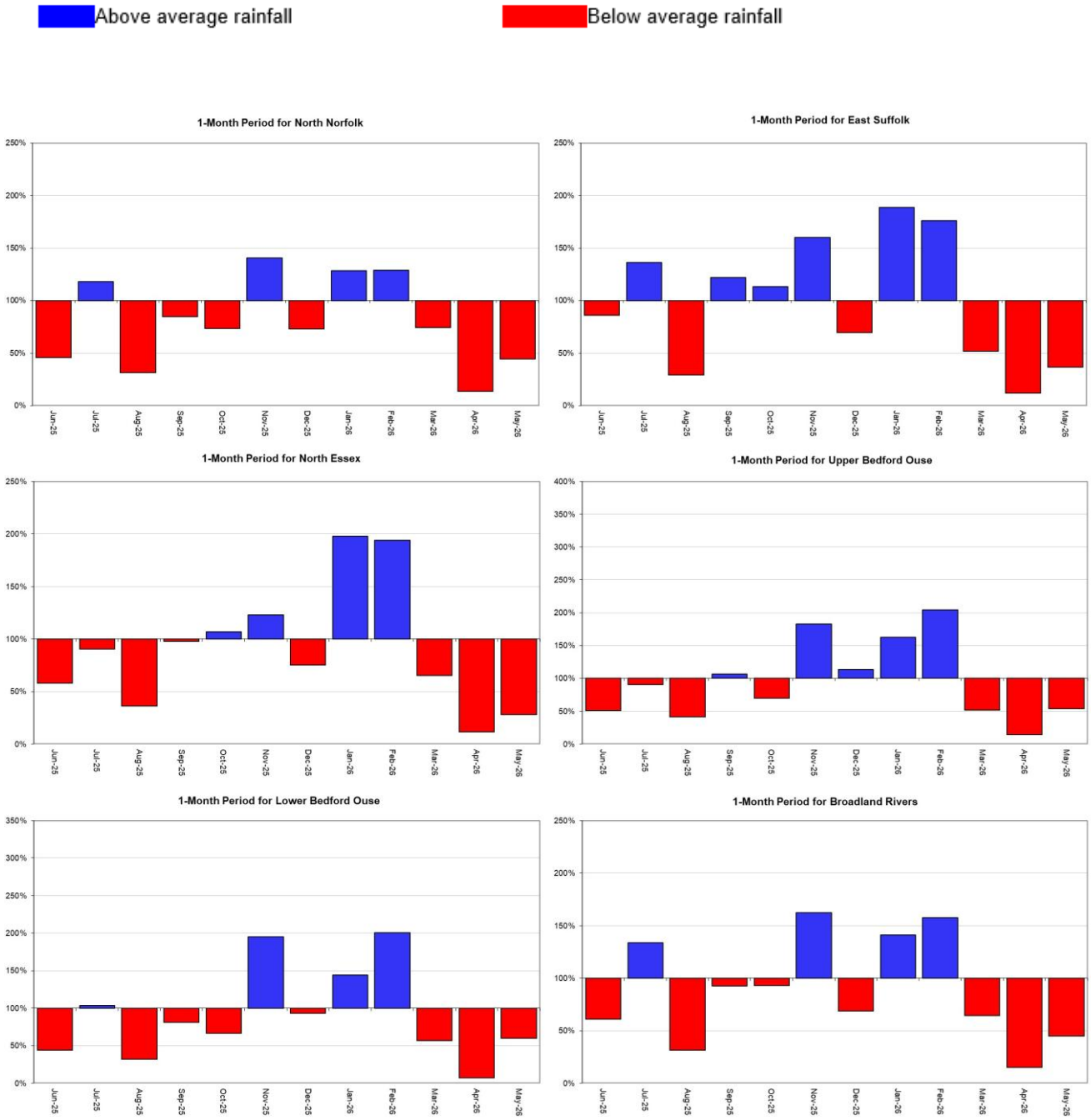
Figure 2.1: Total rainfall for hydrological areas across East Anglia, expressed as a percentage of long term average rainfall for the current month (up to 31 May 2026), the last 3 months, the last 6 months, and the last 12 months. Category classes are based on an analysis of respective historic totals. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.

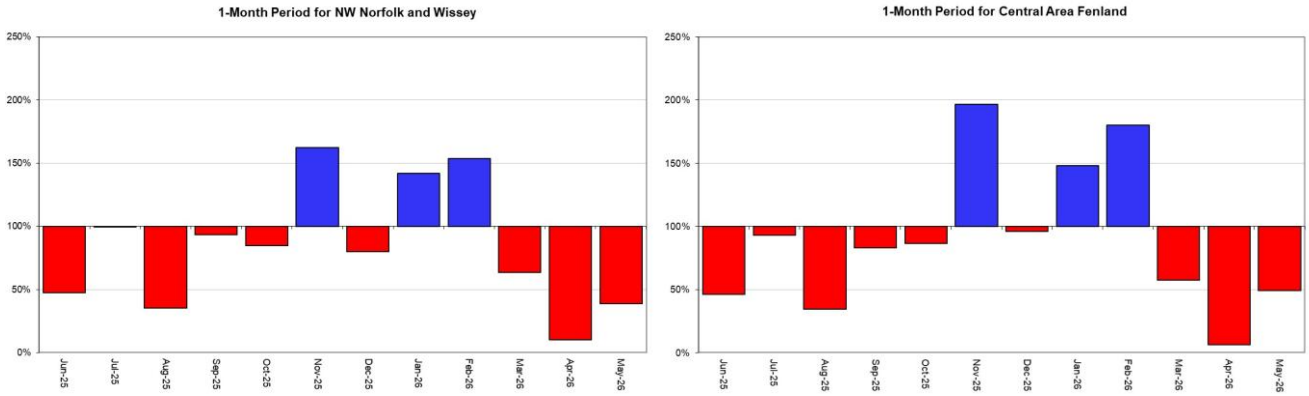


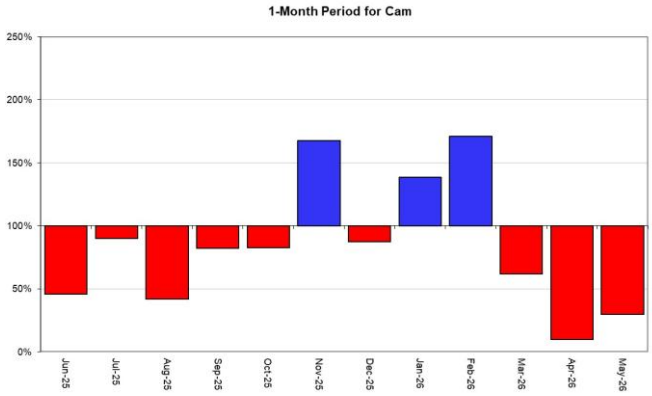
HadUK data based on the Met Office 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from rain gauges (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026). Provisional data based on Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges. Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, 100024198, 2026.

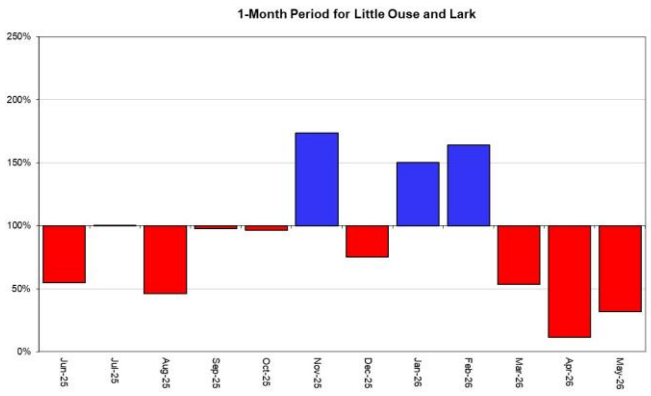
2.2 Rainfall charts

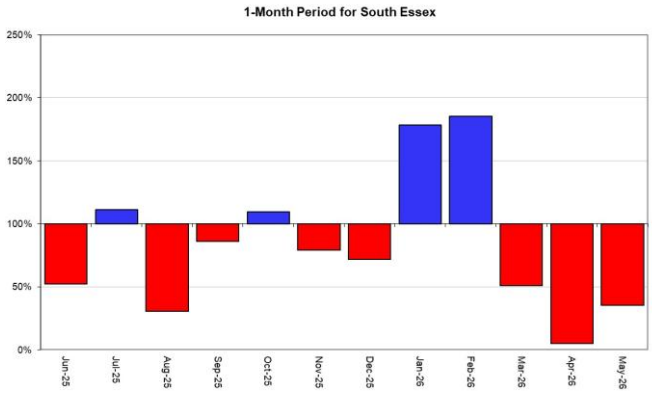
Figure 2.2: Monthly rainfall totals for the past 12 months as a percentage of the 1991 to 2020 long term average for each region and for England.





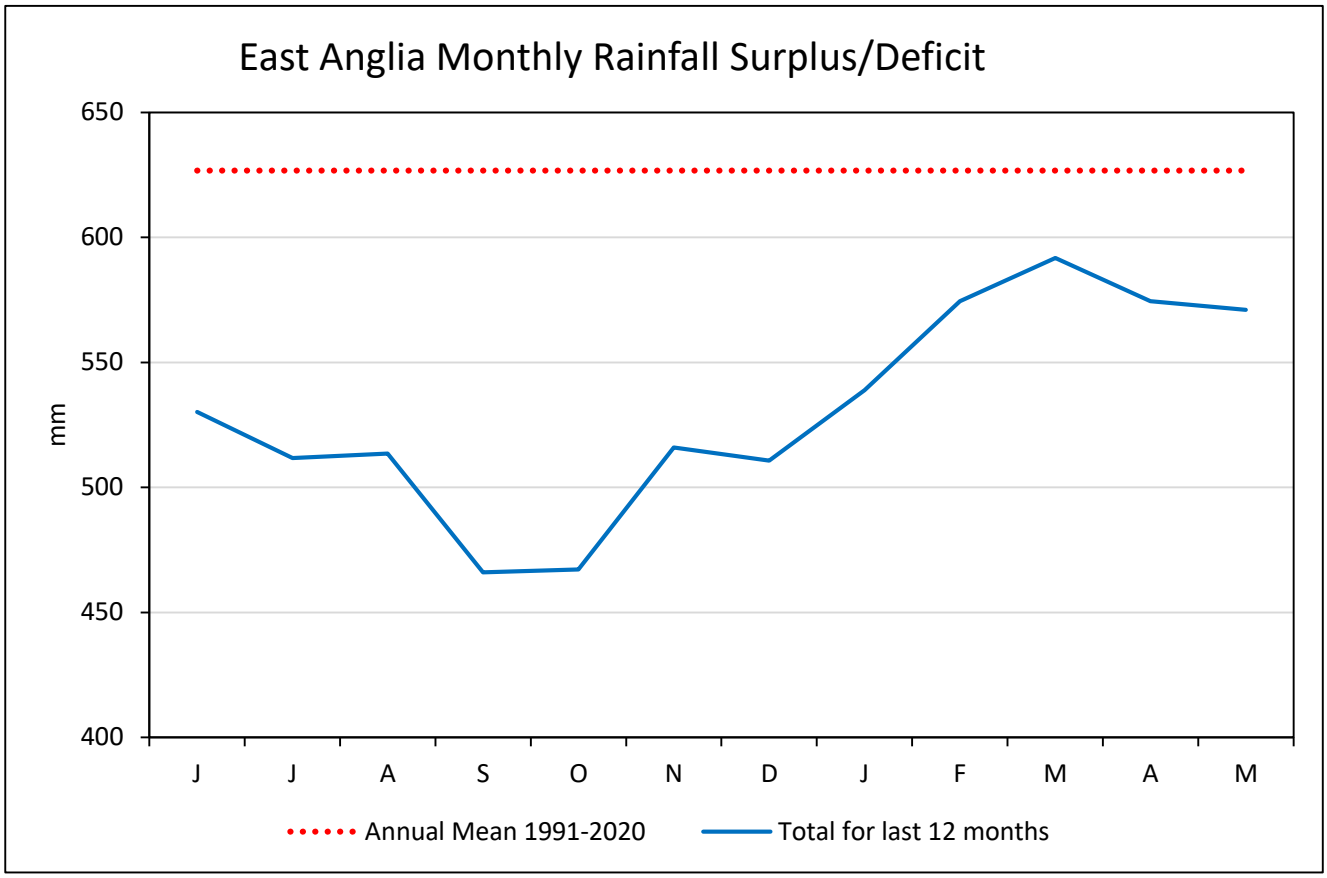






HadUK rainfall data. (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026).

2.3 Monthly rainfall surplus deficit chart



HadUK rainfall data. (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026).

3 Soil moisture deficit

3.1 Soil moisture deficit map

Figure 3.1: Soil moisture deficit values for 31 May 2026. Values based on the weekly MORECS data for real land use.

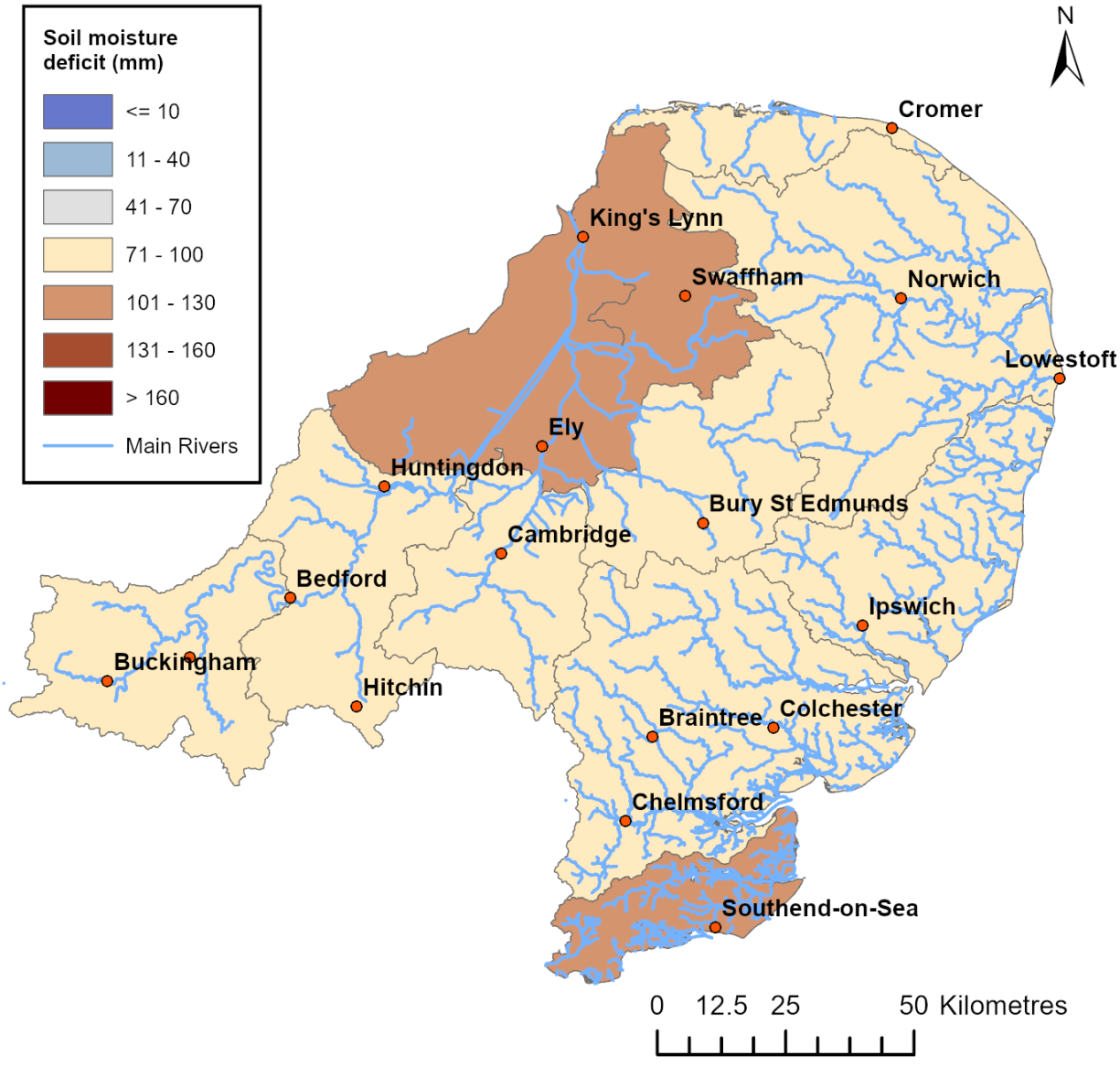
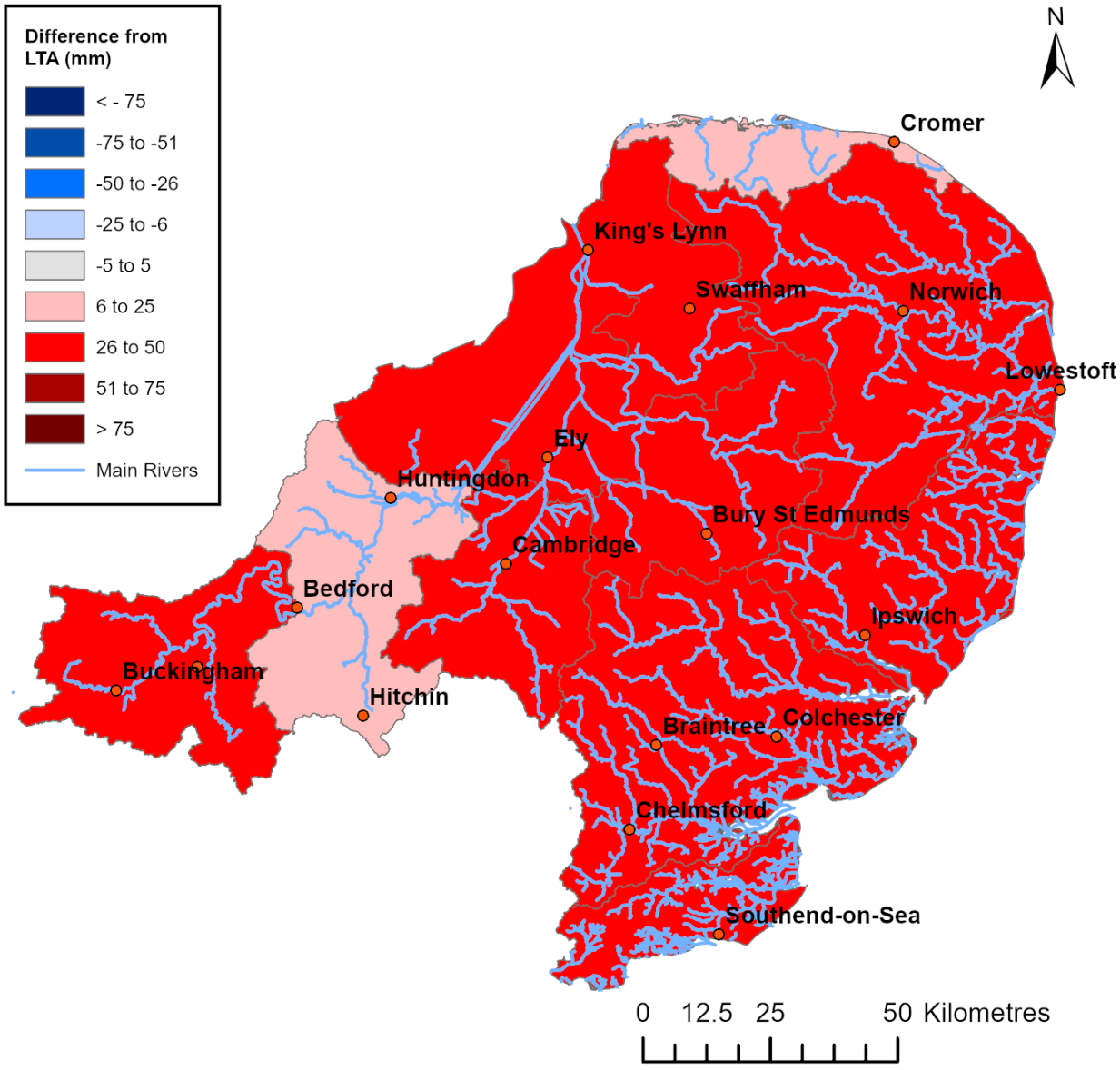
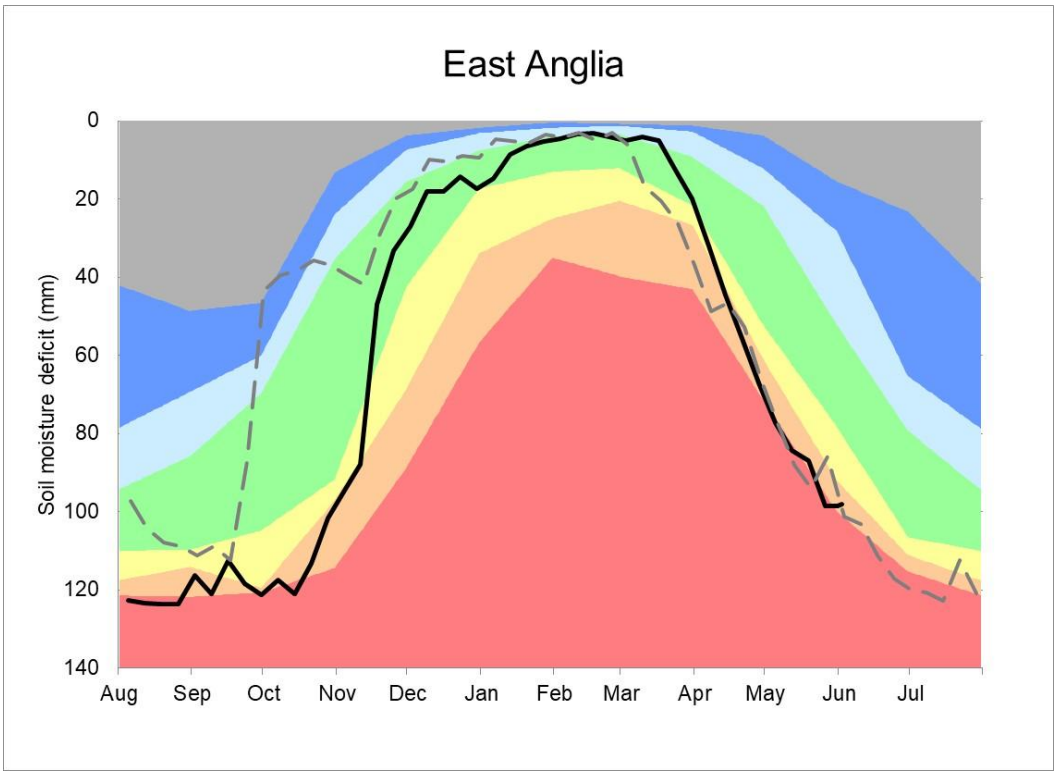


Figure 3.2a: Difference between soil moisture deficit values for 31 May 2026 and the long term average soil moisture deficit values for the end of May. Values based on the weekly MORECS data for real land use.



3.2 Soil moisture deficit charts

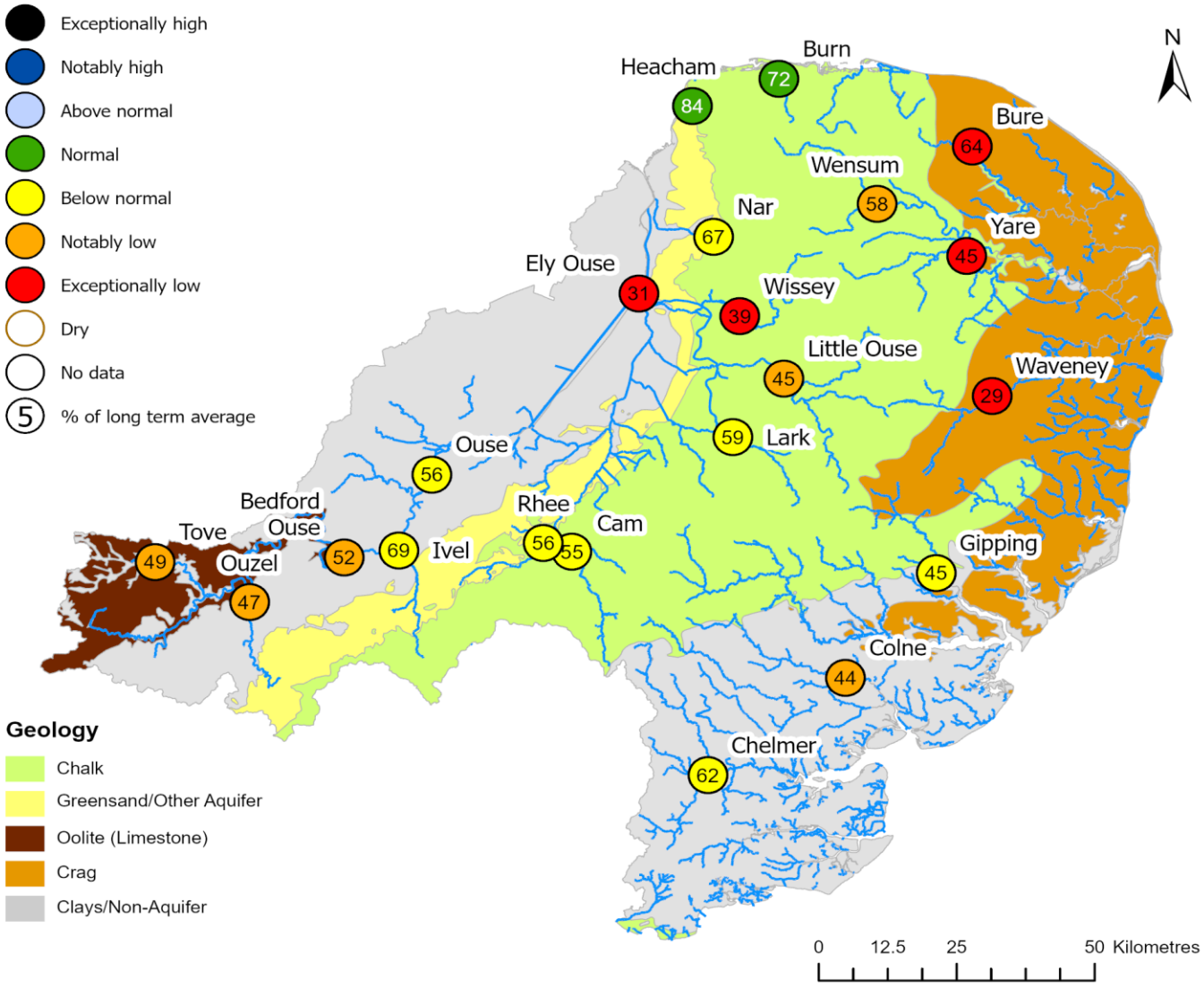
Figure 3.3: Latest soil moisture deficit compared to an analysis of historic 1991 to 2020 long term data set. Weekly MORECS data for real land use.



4 River flows

4.1 River flows map

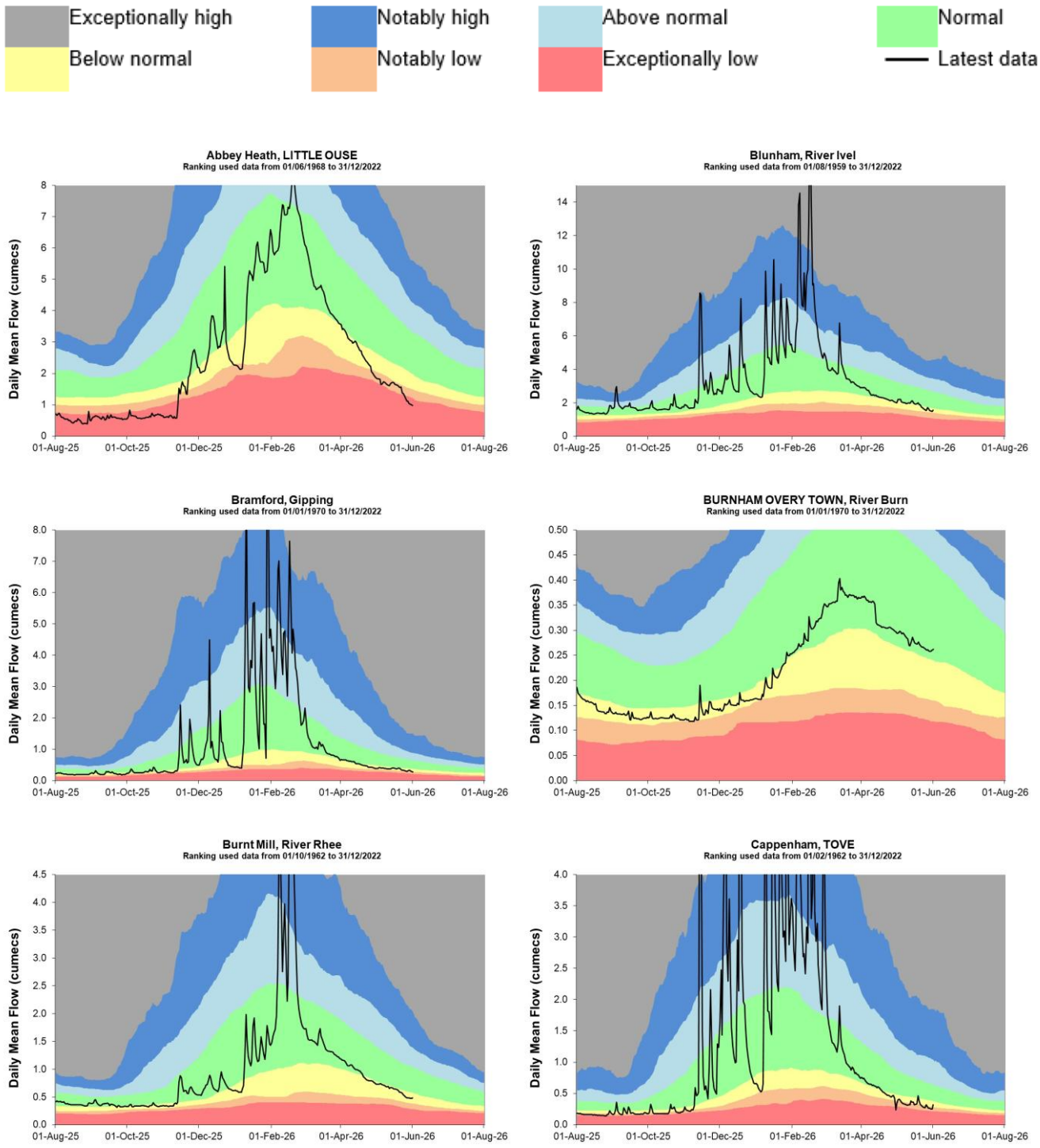
Figure 4.1: Monthly mean river flow for indicator sites for May 2026, expressed as a percentage of the respective long term average and classed relative to an analysis of historic May monthly means Table available in the appendices with detailed information.

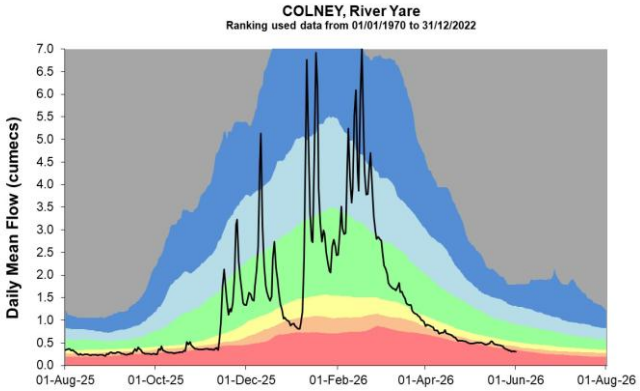


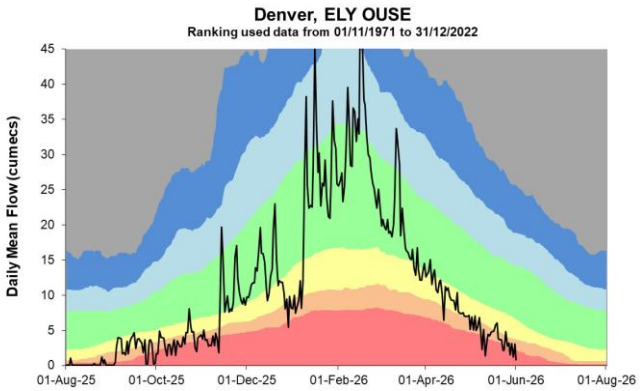
(Source: Environment Agency). Geological map reproduced with kind permission from UK Groundwater Forum, BGS copyright NERC. Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, 100024198, 2026.

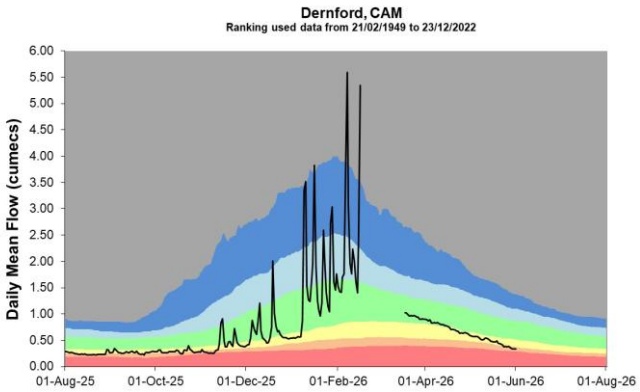
4.2 River flow charts

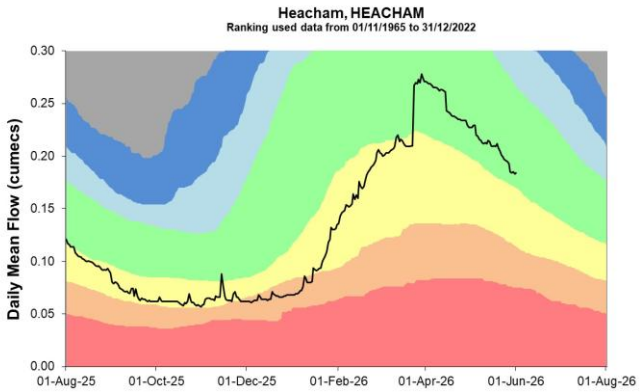
Figure 4.2: Daily mean river flow for index sites over the past year, compared to an analysis of historic daily mean flows, and long term maximum and minimum flows.

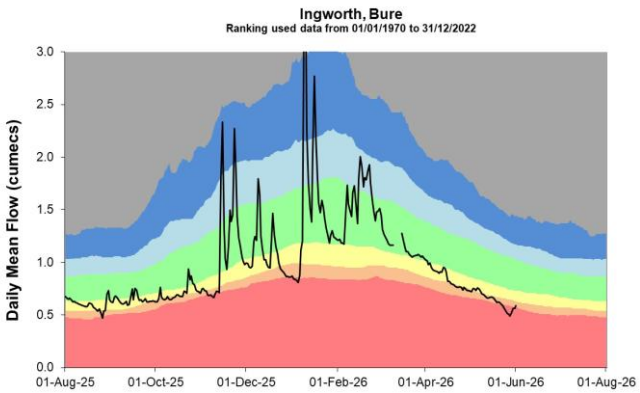


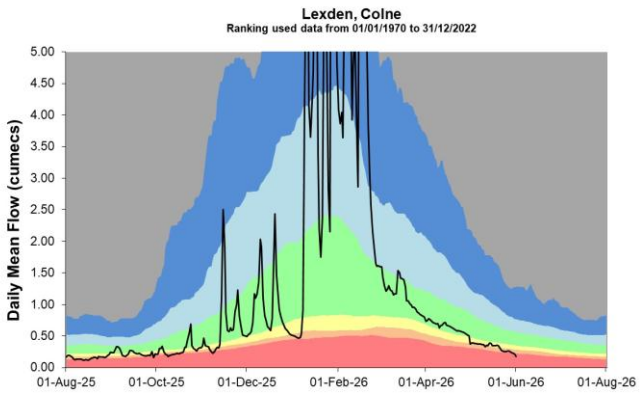

COLNEY, River Yare
Ranking used data from 01/01/1970 to 31/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
7.0
6.5
6.0
5.5
5.0
4.5
4.0
3.5
3.0
2.5
2.0
1.5
1.0
0.5
0.0
01-Aug-25
01-Oct-25
01-Dec-25
01-Feb-26
01-Apr-26
01-Jun-26
01-Aug-26

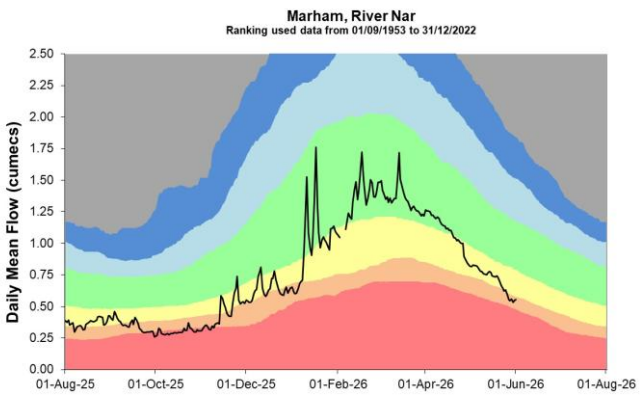

Denver, ELY OUSE
Ranking used data from 01/11/1971 to 31/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
01-Aug-25
01-Oct-25
01-Dec-25
01-Feb-26
01-Apr-26
01-Jun-26
01-Aug-26

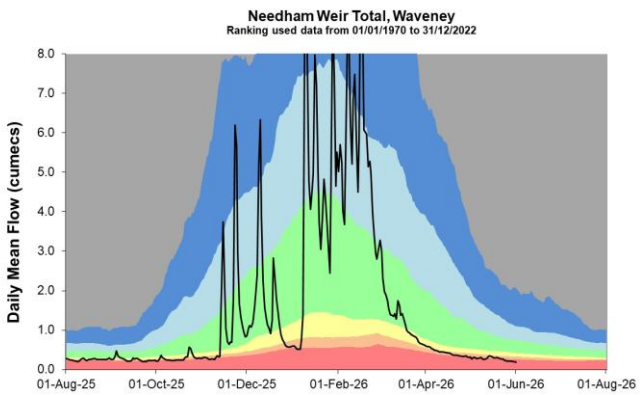

Dernford, CAM
Ranking used data from 21/02/1949 to 23/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
6.00
5.50
5.00
4.50
4.00
3.50
3.00
2.50
2.00
1.50
1.00
0.50
0.00
01-Aug-25
01-Oct-25
01-Dec-25
01-Feb-26
01-Apr-26
01-Jun-26
01-Aug-26

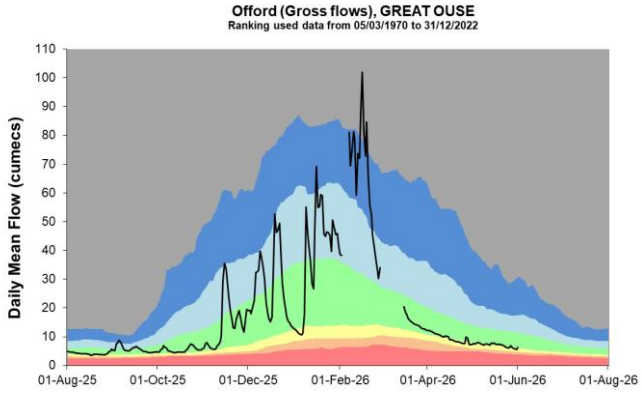

Heacham, HEACHAM
Ranking used data from 01/11/1965 to 31/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
0.30
0.25
0.20
0.15
0.10
0.05
0.00
01-Aug-25
01-Oct-25
01-Dec-25
01-Feb-26
01-Apr-26
01-Jun-26
01-Aug-26

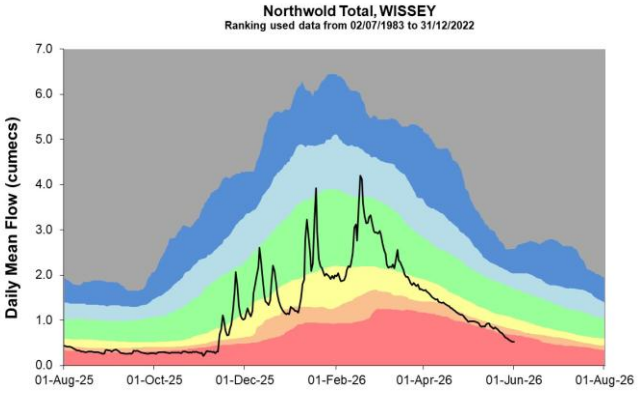

Ingworth, Bure
Ranking used data from 01/01/1970 to 31/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
3.0
2.5
2.0
1.5
1.0
0.5
0.0
01-Aug-25
01-Oct-25
01-Dec-25
01-Feb-26
01-Apr-26
01-Jun-26
01-Aug-26

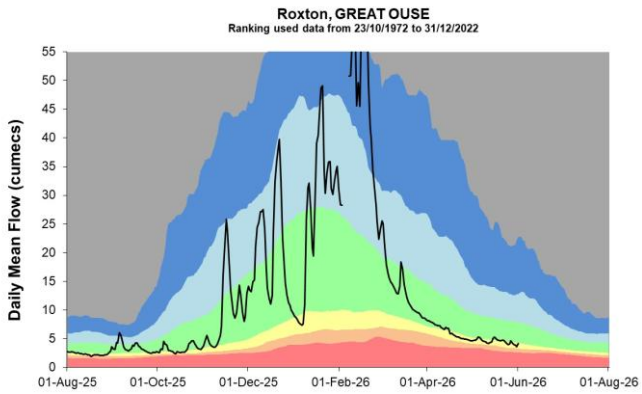

Lexden, Colne
Ranking used data from 01/01/1970 to 31/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
5.00
4.50
4.00
3.50
3.00
2.50
2.00
1.50
1.00
0.50
0.00
01-Aug-25
01-Oct-25
01-Dec-25
01-Feb-26
01-Apr-26
01-Jun-26
01-Aug-26

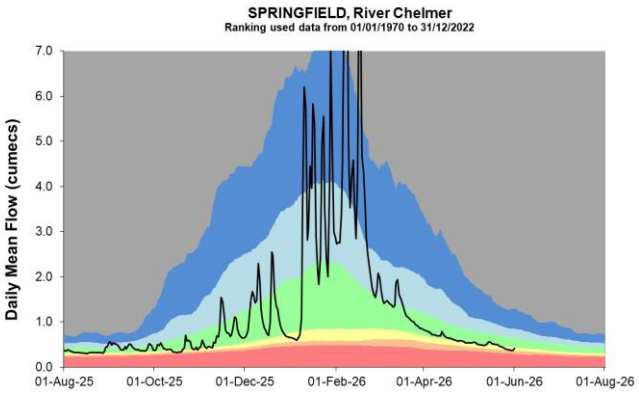

Marham, River Nar
Ranking used data from 01/09/1953 to 31/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
2.50
2.25
2.00
1.75
1.50
1.25
1.00
0.75
0.50
0.25
0.00
01-Aug-25
01-Oct-25
01-Dec-25
01-Feb-26
01-Apr-26
01-Jun-26
01-Aug-26

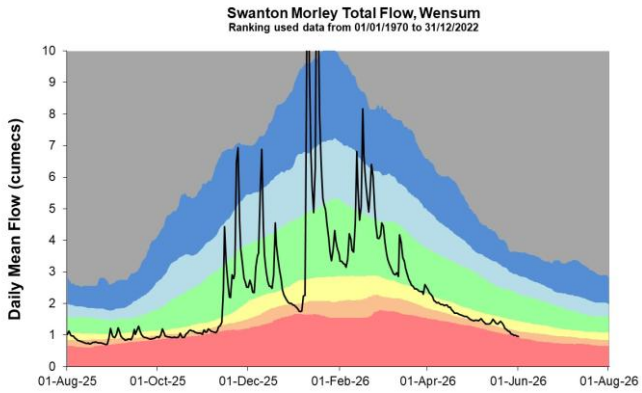

Needham Weir Total, Waveney
Ranking used data from 01/01/1970 to 31/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
8.0
7.0
6.0
5.0
4.0
3.0
2.0
1.0
0.0
01-Aug-25
01-Oct-25
01-Dec-25
01-Feb-26
01-Apr-26
01-Jun-26
01-Aug-26

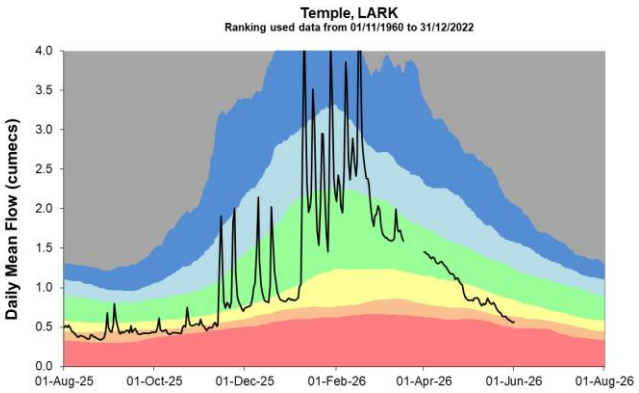


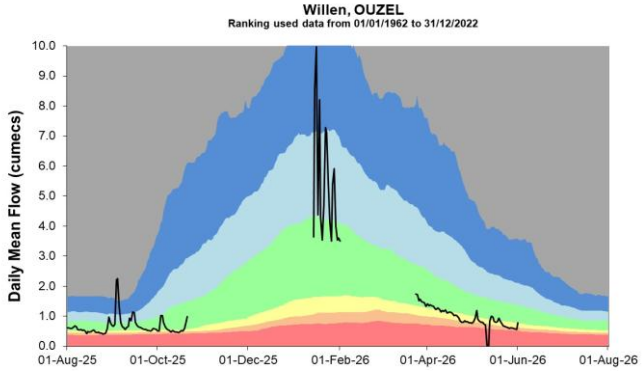










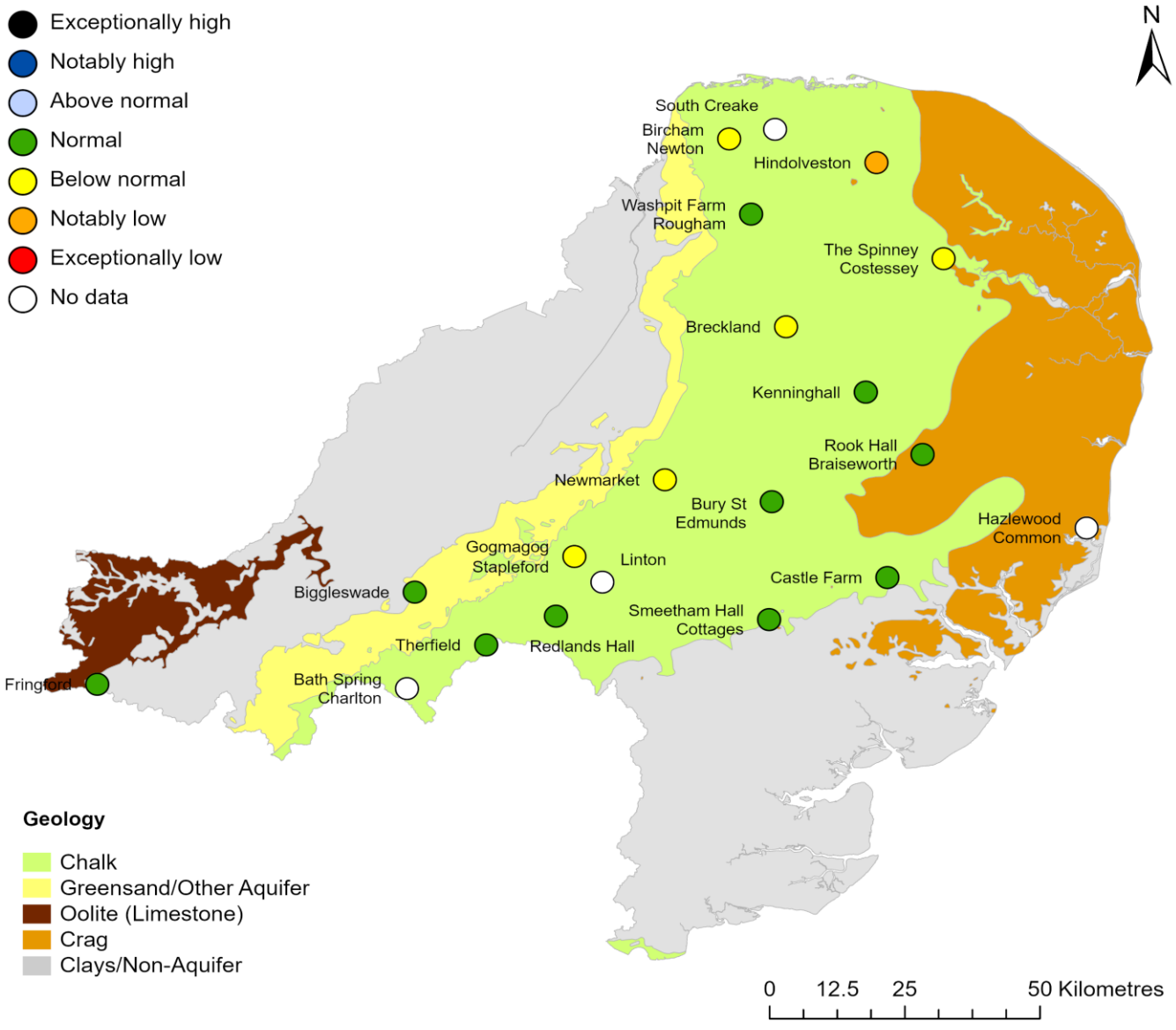


Source: Environment Agency.

5 Groundwater levels

5.1 Groundwater levels map

Figure 5.1: Groundwater levels for indicator sites at the end of May 2026, classed relative to an analysis of respective historic May levels. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.



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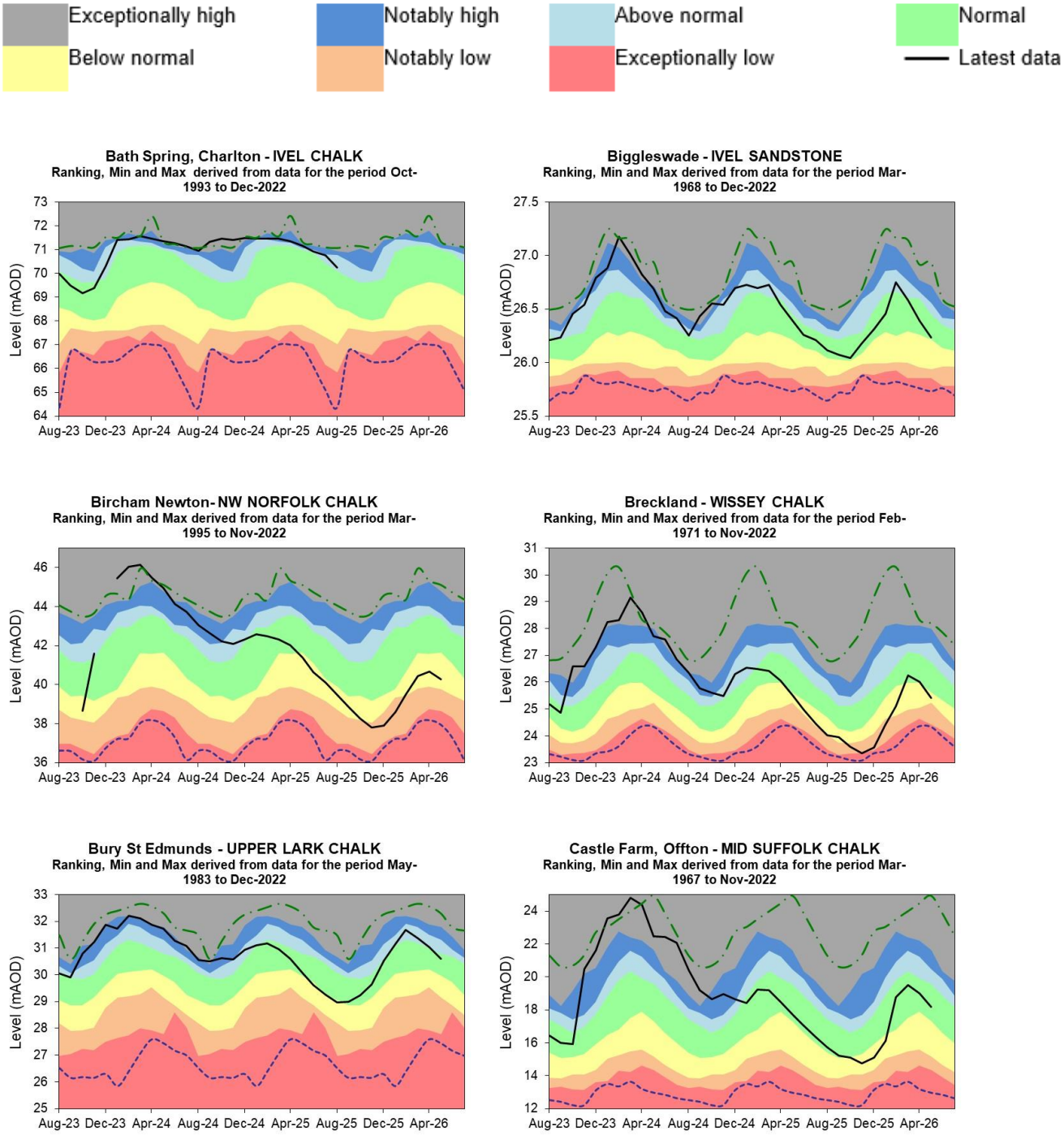
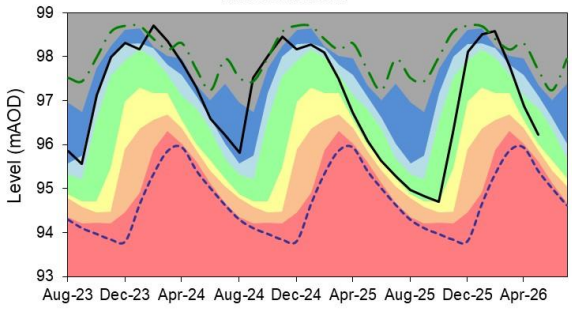
5.2 Groundwater level charts

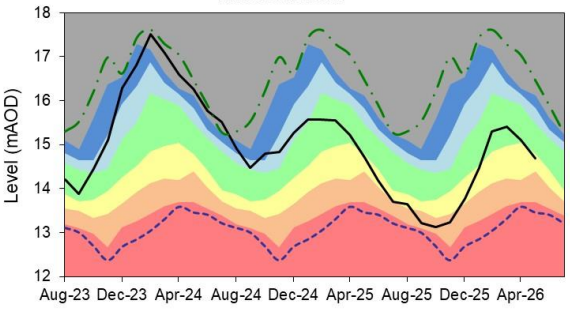
Figure 5.2: End of month groundwater levels at index groundwater level sites for major aquifers. 22 months compared to an analysis of historic end of month levels and long term maximum and minimum levels.



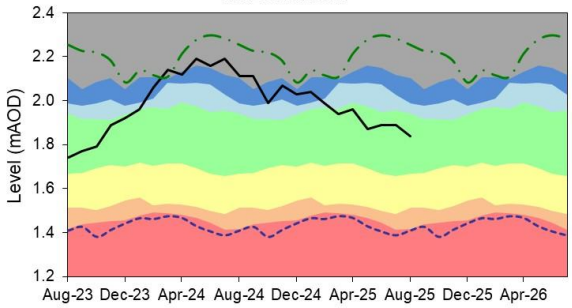
Fringford - GREAT OOLITE
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Sep-1980 to Dec-2022



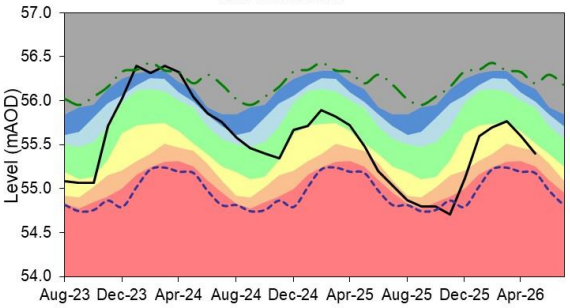
Gog Magog, Stapleford - CAM CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Jan-1980 to Dec-2022



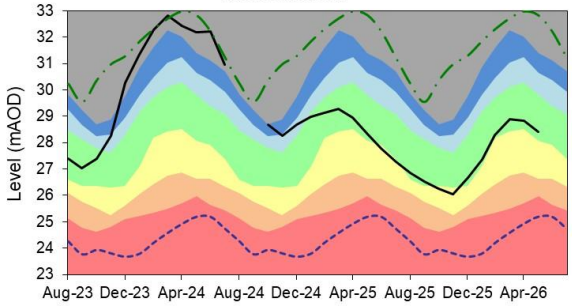
Hazlewood Common - SUFFOLK CRAG
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Oct-1988 to Nov-2022



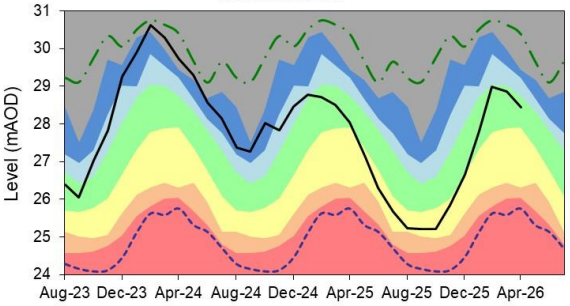
Hindolveston - NORFOLK CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Sep-1984 to Nov-2022



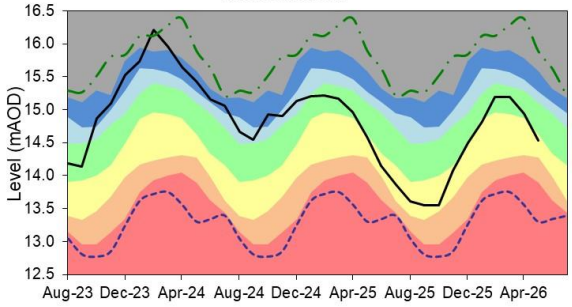
Kenninghall - LITTLE OUSE CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Aug-1973 to Dec-2022



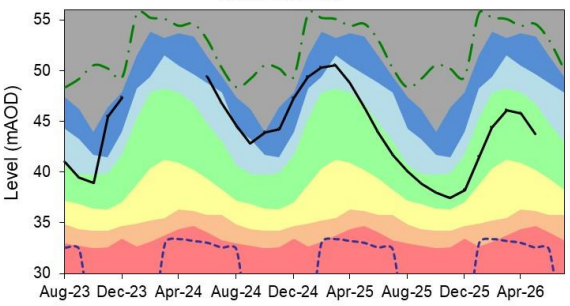
Linton- CAM CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Jan-1980 to Dec-2022

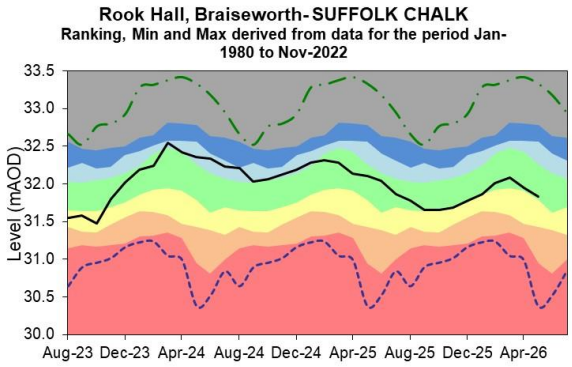


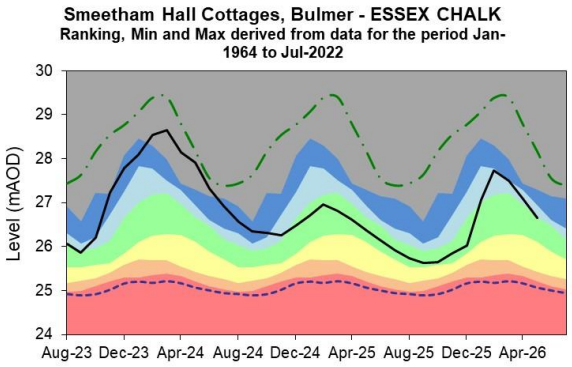
Newmarket - SNAIL CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Feb-1983 to Dec-2022

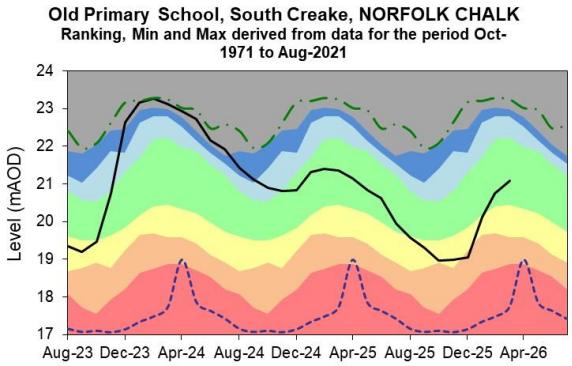


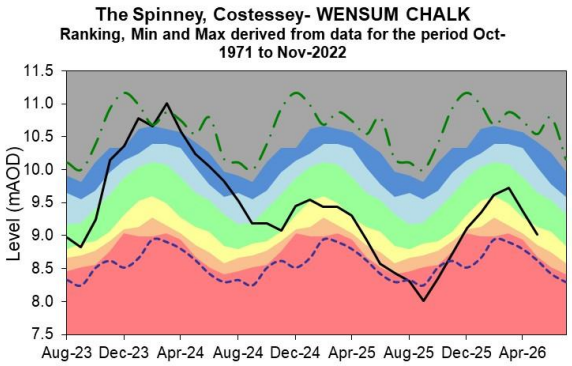
Redlands Hall, Ickleton - CAM CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Aug-1963 to Dec-2022

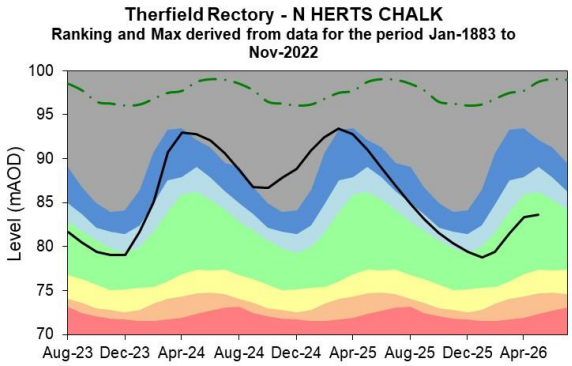


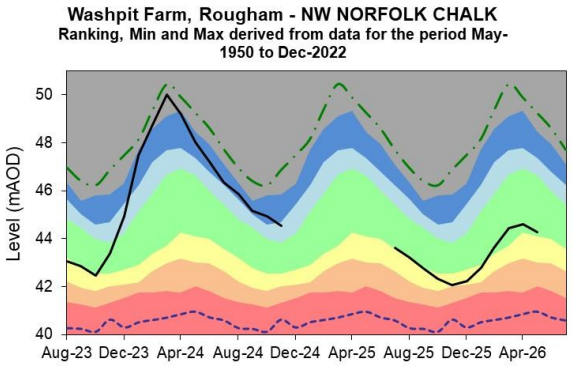








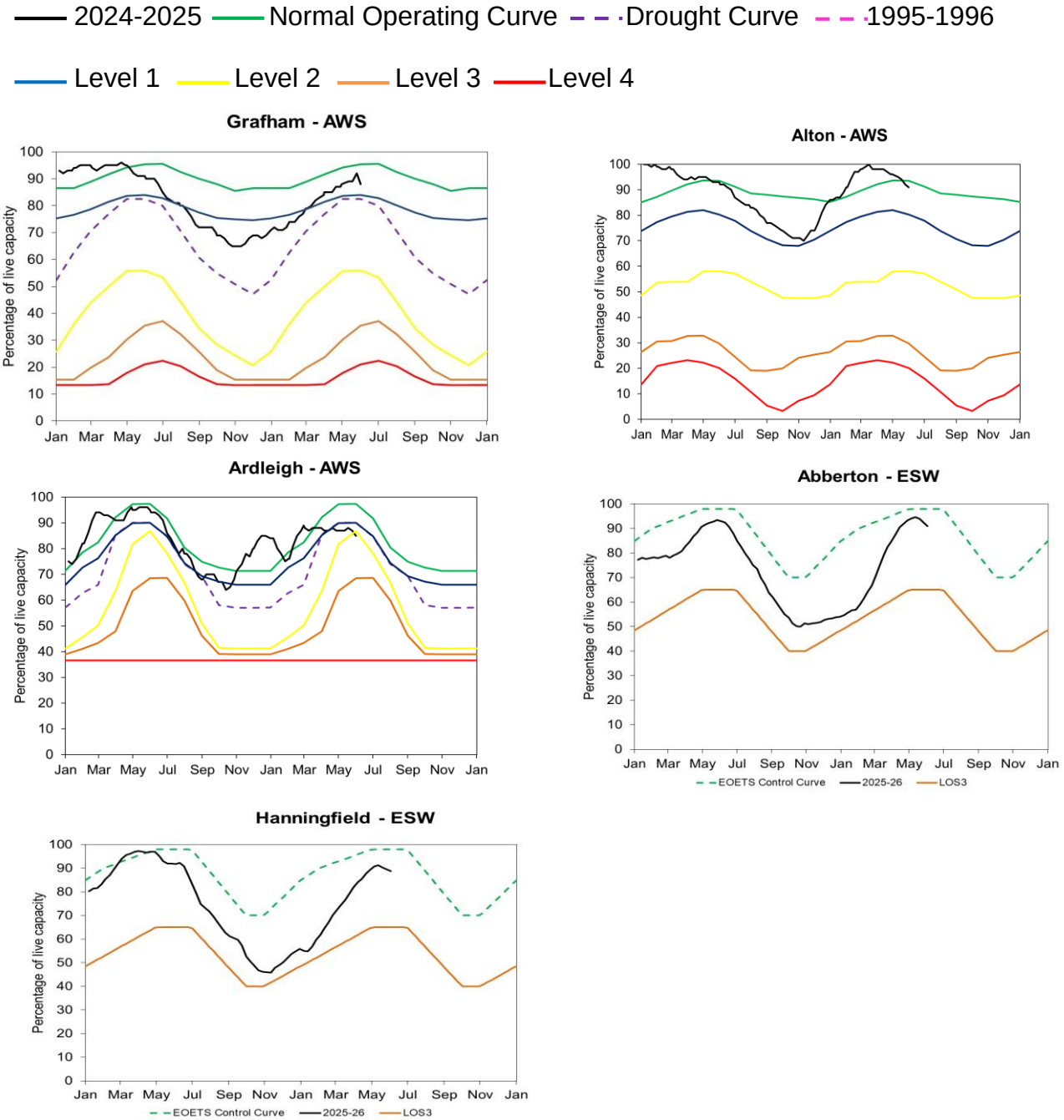




Source: Environment Agency, 2026.

6 Reservoir stocks

Figure 6.1: End of month regional reservoir stocks compared to the normal operating curve, drought curve and dry 1995-1996 stocks. Note: Historic records of individual reservoirs and reservoir groups making up the regional values vary in length.



(Source: water companies. For more information on Anglian Water's reservoir level curves, please see Appendix 4 in their Drought Plan).

7 Glossary

7.1 Terminology

Aquifer

A geological formation able to store and transmit water.

Areal average rainfall

The estimated average depth of rainfall over a defined area. Expressed in depth of water (mm).

Artesian

The condition where the groundwater level is above ground surface but is prevented from rising to this level by an overlying continuous low permeability layer, such as clay.

Artesian borehole

Borehole where the level of groundwater is above the top of the borehole and groundwater flows out of the borehole when unsealed.

Cumecs

Cubic metres per second (m^{3s-1}).

Effective rainfall

The rainfall available to percolate into the soil or produce river flow. Expressed in depth of water (mm).

Flood alert and flood warning

Three levels of warnings may be issued by the Environment Agency. Flood alerts indicate flooding is possible. Flood warnings indicate flooding is expected. Severe flood warnings indicate severe flooding.

Groundwater

The water found in an aquifer.

Long term average (LTA)

The arithmetic mean calculated from the historic record, usually based on the period 1991 to 2020. However, the period used may vary by parameter being reported on (see figure captions for details).

mAOD

Metres above ordnance datum (mean sea level at Newlyn Cornwall).

MORECS

Met Office Rainfall and Evaporation Calculation System. Met Office service providing real time calculation of evapotranspiration, soil moisture deficit and effective rainfall on a 40 by 40 km grid.

Naturalised flow

River flow with the impacts of artificial influences removed. Artificial influences may include abstractions, discharges, transfers, augmentation and impoundments.

NCIC

National Climate Information Centre. NCIC area monthly rainfall totals are derived using the Met Office 5 km gridded dataset, which uses rain gauge observations.

Recharge

The process of increasing the water stored in the saturated zone of an aquifer. Expressed in depth of water (mm).

Reservoir gross capacity

The total capacity of a reservoir.

Reservoir live capacity

The capacity of the reservoir that is normally usable for storage to meet established reservoir operating requirements. This excludes any capacity not available for use (for example, storage held back for emergency services, operating agreements or physical restrictions). May also be referred to as ‘net’ or ‘deployable’ capacity.

Soil moisture deficit (SMD)

The difference between the amount of water actually in the soil and the amount of water the soil can hold. Expressed in depth of water (mm).

7.2 Categories

Exceptionally high

Value likely to fall within this band 5% of the time.

Notably high

Value likely to fall within this band 8% of the time.

Above normal

Value likely to fall within this band 15% of the time.

Normal

Value likely to fall within this band 44% of the time.

Below normal

Value likely to fall within this band 15% of the time.

Notably low

Value likely to fall within this band 8% of the time.

Exceptionally low

Value likely to fall within this band 5% of the time.

8 Appendices

8.1 Rainfall table

Hydrological area	May 2026 rainfall % of long term average 1991 to 2020	May 2026 band	Mar 2026 to May cumulative band	Dec 2025 to May cumulative band	Jun 2025 to May cumulative band
Broadland Rivers	45	Notably Low	Exceptionally low	Normal	Normal
Cam	30	Exceptionally Low	Exceptionally low	Below normal	Below normal
Central Area Fenland	49	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Normal	Normal
East Suffolk	36	Notably Low	Exceptionally low	Normal	Normal
Little Ouse And Lark	32	Notably Low	Exceptionally low	Below normal	Normal
Lower Bedford Ouse	60	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Normal	Normal
North Essex	28	Exceptionally Low	Exceptionally low	Normal	Normal
North Norfolk	45	Notably Low	Exceptionally low	Below normal	Below normal
Nw Norfolk And Wissey	39	Notably Low	Exceptionally low	Below normal	Below normal

South Essex	35	Notably Low	Exceptionally low	Normal	Below normal
Upper Bedford Ouse	54	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Normal	Normal

8.2 River flows table

Site name	River	Catchment	May 2026 band	Apr 2026 band
Abbey Heath	Little Ouse	Little Ouse	Notably low	Below normal
Blunham	Ivel	Ivel	Below normal	Below normal
Bramford	Gipping	Gipping	Below normal	Below normal
Burnham Overy	Burn	Burn	Normal	Normal
Burnt Mill	Rhee	Rhee	Below normal	Below normal
Cappenham	Tove	Tove	Notably low	Normal
Colney	Yare	Yare	Exceptionally low	Notably low
Denver	Ely Ouse	Cutoff and Renew Channel	Exceptionally low	Notably low
Dernford	Cam	Cam	Below normal	Below normal
Heacham	Heacham	Heacham	Normal	Normal
Ingworth	Bure	Bure	Exceptionally low	Notably low
Lexden	Colne	Colne Essex	Notably low	Normal
Marham	Nar	Nar	Below normal	Normal
Needham Weir Total	Waveney (lower)	Waveney	Exceptionally low	Notably low

Northwold Total	Wissey	Wissey	Exceptionally low	Notably low
Offord (gross Flows)	Great Ouse	Ouse Beds	Below normal	Below normal
Roxton	Great Ouse	Ivel	Notably low	Below normal
Springfield	Chelmer	Chelmer Upper	Below normal	Normal
Swanton Morley Total	Wensum	Wensum	Notably low	Below normal
Temple	Lark	Lark	Below normal	Normal
Willen	Ouzel	Ouzel	Notably low	Below normal

8.3 Groundwater table

Site name	Aquifer	End of May 2026 band	End of Apr 2026 band
Biggleswade	Ivel Woburn Sands	Normal	Normal
Bircham Newton	North West Norfolk Chalk	Below normal	Below normal
Breckland	Wissey Chalk	Below normal	Normal
Bury St Edmunds	Upper Lark Chalk	Normal	Above normal
Castle Farm, Offton	East Suffolk Chalk	Normal	Normal
Gog Magog, Stapleford	Cam Chalk	Below normal	Normal
Hazlewood Common	East Suffolk Crag	No Data	No Data
Hindolveston	Norfolk Chalk	Notably low	Below normal
Kenninghall	Little Ouse Chalk	Normal	Normal
Linton	Cam Chalk	No Data	No Data
Newmarket	Snail Chalk	Below normal	Normal
Old Primary School, South Creake	North Norfolk Chalk	No Data	No Data

Redlands Hall, Ickleton	Cam Chalk	Normal	Normal
Rook Hall, Braiseworth	East Suffolk Chalk	Normal	Normal
Smeetham Hall Cottages, Bulmer	North Essex Chalk	Normal	Above normal
The Spinney, Costessey	Wensum Chalk	Below normal	Normal
Washpit Farm, Rougham	North West Norfolk Chalk	Normal	Normal
Therfield Rectory	Upper Lee Chalk	Normal	Normal
Fringford P.s.	Upper Bedford Ouse Oolitic Limestone (great)	Normal	Normal