Monthly water situation report: East Anglia

1 Summary - September 2026

East Anglia rainfall for September 2026 ranged from 36% to 76% of the long term average (LTA) for the month. Across East Anglia this was the driest April to September period to date (1871 to 2026), receiving 48% of the LTA. Soil moisture deficit (SMD) has increased in all catchments. River flows have continued in an overall downwards trend, some showing a sharp but short recovery period towards the start of the month during which most rainfall was received. Month Mean flows were predominantly below normal or exceptionally low for the time of year. Groundwater levels continue to decline, with the majority of sites recording below normal to exceptionally low levels for the time of year. Anglian public water supply reservoirs ended September 2026 with levels ranging from 53% to 81% of full storage capacity.

1.1 Rainfall

An average of 30.4mm of rain fell across East Anglia in September, 58% of the LTA. The month started with predominantly dry weather with some short rainfall events, before transitioning to persistent dry conditions for most of the remaining month. Most rainfall was received between the 3rd and 13th of the month. The highest rainfall totals were recorded in the southern areas, North Essex and South Essex receiving 69% and 76% of their LTAs respectively. The lowest rainfall total was recorded in North Norfolk which received only 36% of the LTA.

Over the past 6 months, all hydrological areas in East Anglia recorded exceptionally low rainfall. The total rainfall for East Anglia in the 6 months from April 2026 to September 2026 was 155mm, ranking as the driest 6th month April to September period on record. Over the past 6 months, East Anglia has received 48% of the LTA rainfall.

1.2 Soil moisture deficit

The SMD for East Anglia at the end of September 2026 was 121mm. The SMD increased sharply at the start of the month following the sudden reduction experienced with the rainfall at the end of September. Most hydrological areas in East Anglia recorded SMD levels between 101mm and 130mm, with the exception of South Essex and Cam which both recorded SMDs of 131mm to 160mm. The SMD was 26mm to 50mm greater than the LTA at the end of the month for all hydrological areas with the exception of South Essex which was 6mm to 25mm greater.

1.3 River flows

Daily mean river flows continued an overall recession through September, with some rivers showing a sudden, though short, period of recovery with rainfall early in the month. Monthly mean river flows varied across East Anglia during September, ranging between 27% and 83% of the LTA. Most flow monitoring sites reported notably low or exceptionally low monthly mean periods for the time of year. The lowest flows were found towards the central and south-eastern areas, while the western catchments of the Upper Bedford Ouse and northern catchments of North West Norfolk closer to expected rates.

1.4 Groundwater levels

Groundwater levels continued to fall across all of East Anglia in September as a result of low rainfall. More than half of our groundwater sites for which data is available recorded below normal to exceptionally low levels for the time year. Sites reading normal levels are mostly found at the south end of the area. No sites are holding above normal levels for the time of year anymore.

1.5 Reservoir stocks

Reservoir storage has continued to fall through September, with all reservoir levels below their target curves for the time of year. Storage capacity ranged from 40% capacity at Hanningfield to 59% capacity at Ardleigh reservoir.

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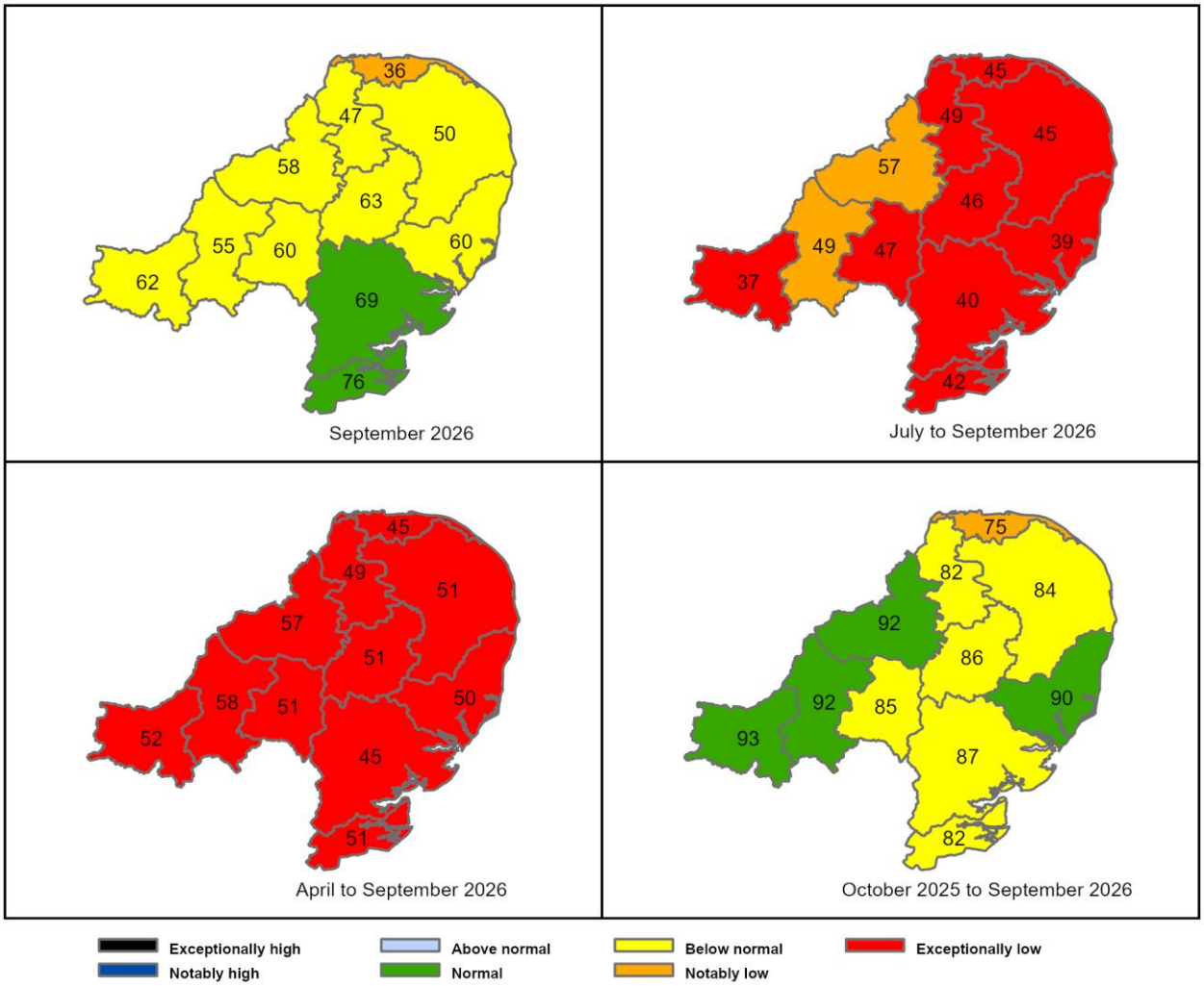
2 Rainfall

2.1 Rainfall map

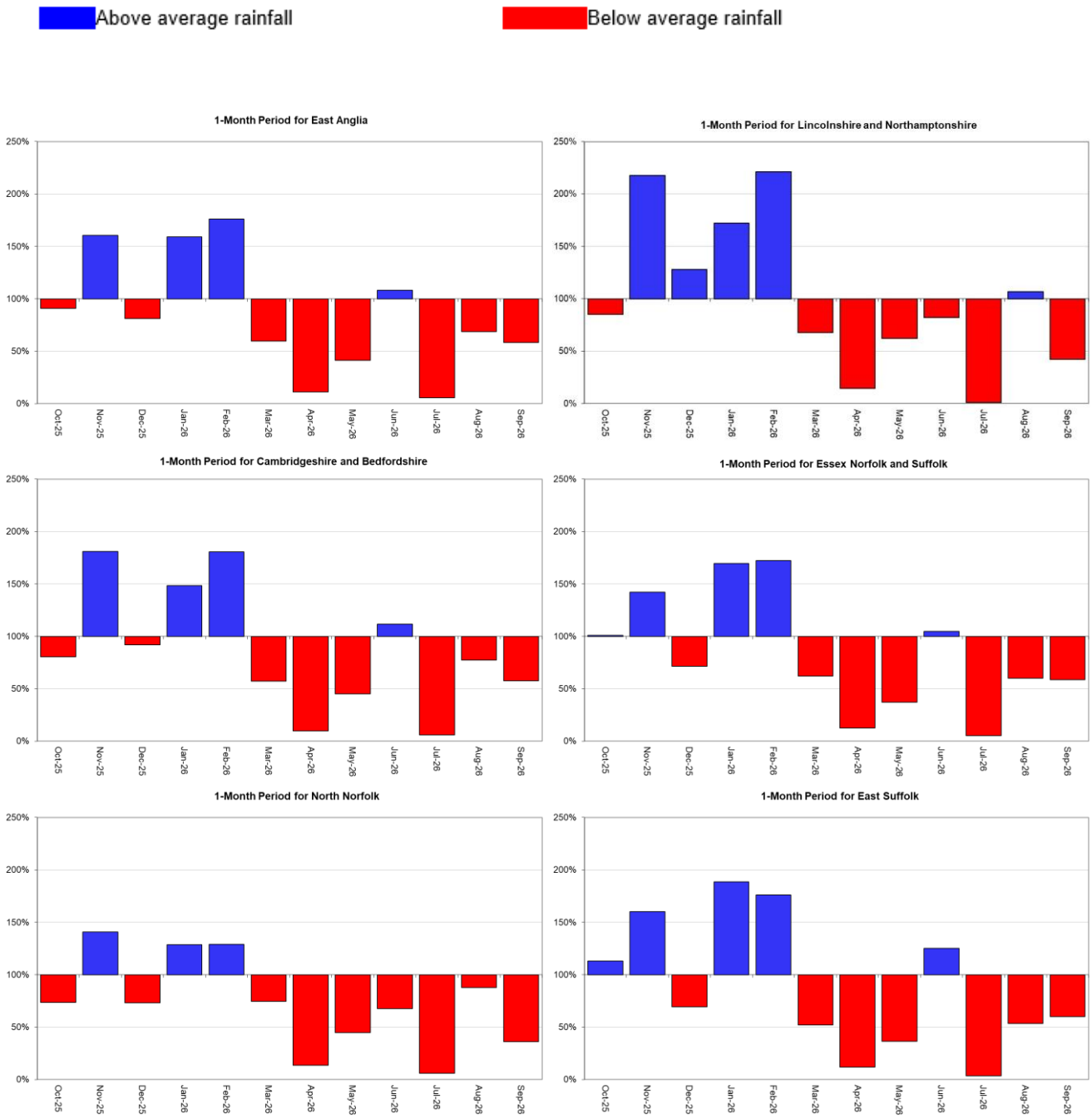
Figure 2.1: Total rainfall for hydrological areas across East Anglia, expressed as a percentage of long term average rainfall for the current month (up to 30 September 2026), the last 3 months, the last 6 months, and the last 12 months. Category classes are based on an analysis of respective historic totals. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.

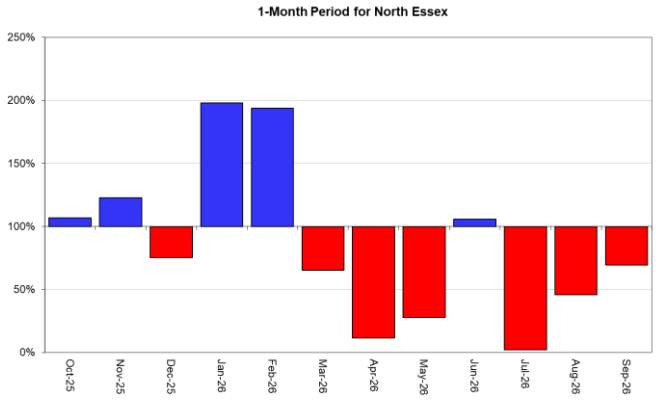


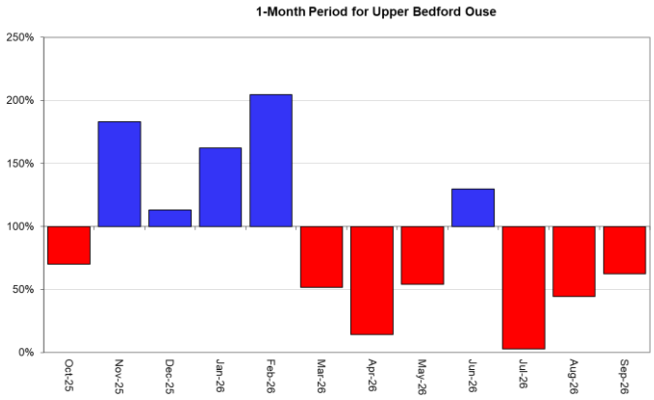
Rainfall data for Jan 2025 onwards, extracted from Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges. (Source: Environment Agency. Crown Copyright, AC0000807064, 2026). Rainfall data prior to Jan 2025, extracted from Met Office HadUK 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from registered rain gauges (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026).

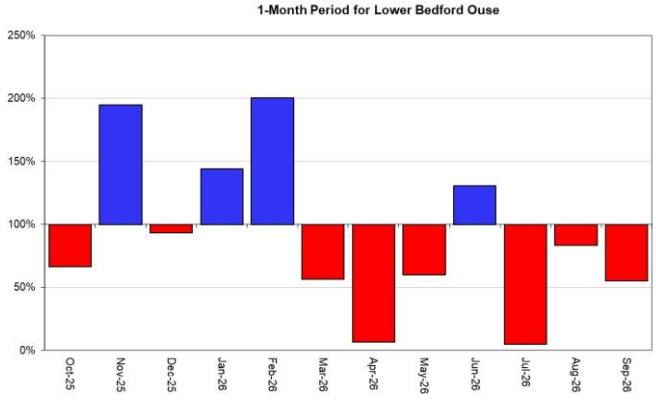
2.2 Rainfall charts

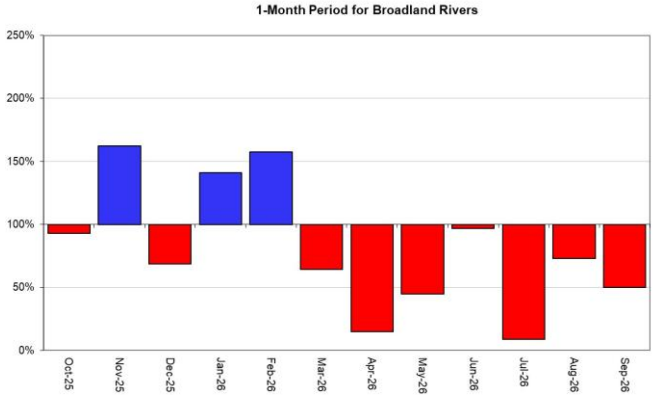
Figure 2.2: Monthly rainfall totals for the past 12 months as a percentage of the 1991 to 2020 long term average for each hydrological area.




1-Month Period for North Essex
250%
200%
150%
100%
50%
0%
Oct-25
Nov-25
Dec-25
Jan-26
Feb-26
Mar-26
Apr-26
May-26
Jun-26
Jul-26
Aug-26
Sep-26


1-Month Period for Upper Bedford Ouse
250%
200%
150%
100%
50%
0%
Oct-25
Nov-25
Dec-25
Jan-26
Feb-26
Mar-26
Apr-26
May-26
Jun-26
Jul-26
Aug-26
Sep-26


1-Month Period for Lower Bedford Ouse
250%
200%
150%
100%
50%
0%
Oct-25
Nov-25
Dec-25
Jan-26
Feb-26
Mar-26
Apr-26
May-26
Jun-26
Jul-26
Aug-26
Sep-26


1-Month Period for Broadland Rivers
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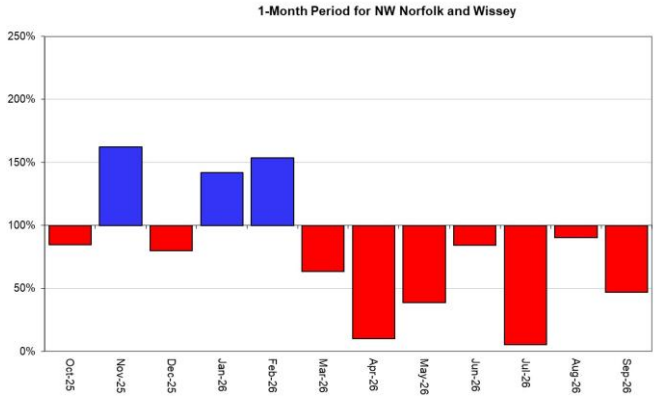
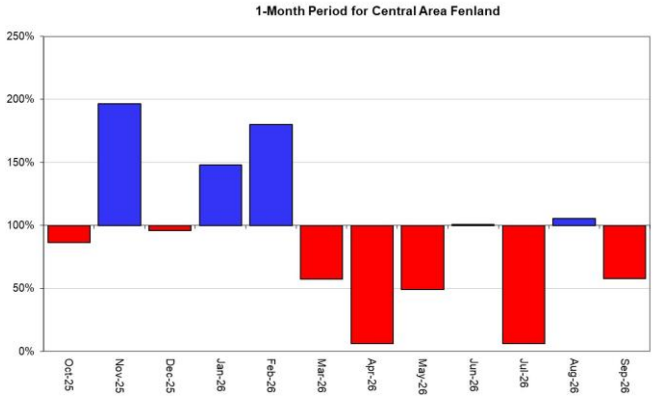
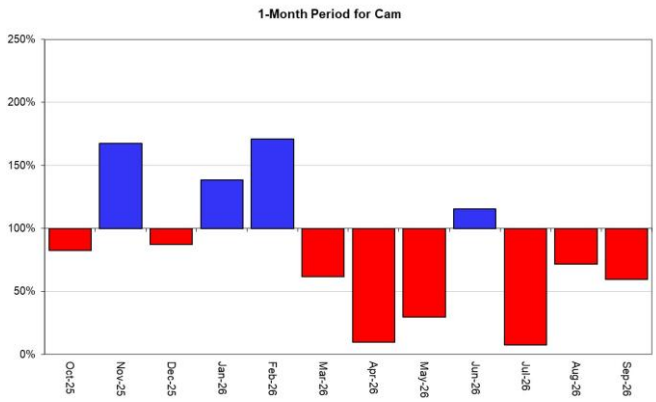
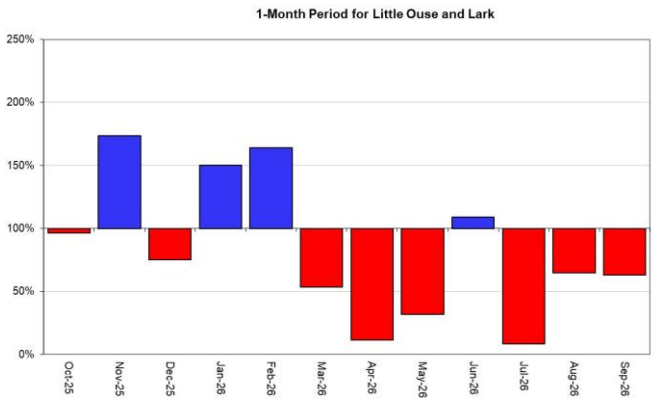
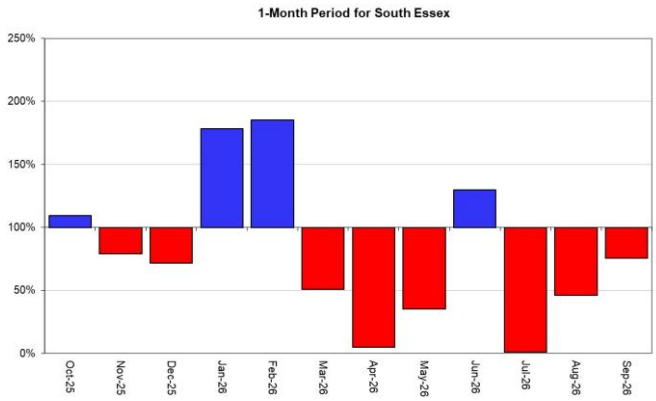
200%
150%
100%
50%
0%
Oct-25
Nov-25
Dec-25
Jan-26
Feb-26
Mar-26
Apr-26
May-26
Jun-26
Jul-26
Aug-26
Sep-26


1-Month Period for NW Norfolk and Wissey
250%
200%
150%
100%
50%
0%
Oct-25
Nov-25
Dec-25
Jan-26
Feb-26
Mar-26
Apr-26
May-26
Jun-26
Jul-26
Aug-26
Sep-26


1-Month Period for Central Area Fenland
250%
200%
150%
100%
50%
0%
Oct-25
Nov-25
Dec-25
Jan-26
Feb-26
Mar-26
Apr-26
May-26
Jun-26
Jul-26
Aug-26
Sep-26



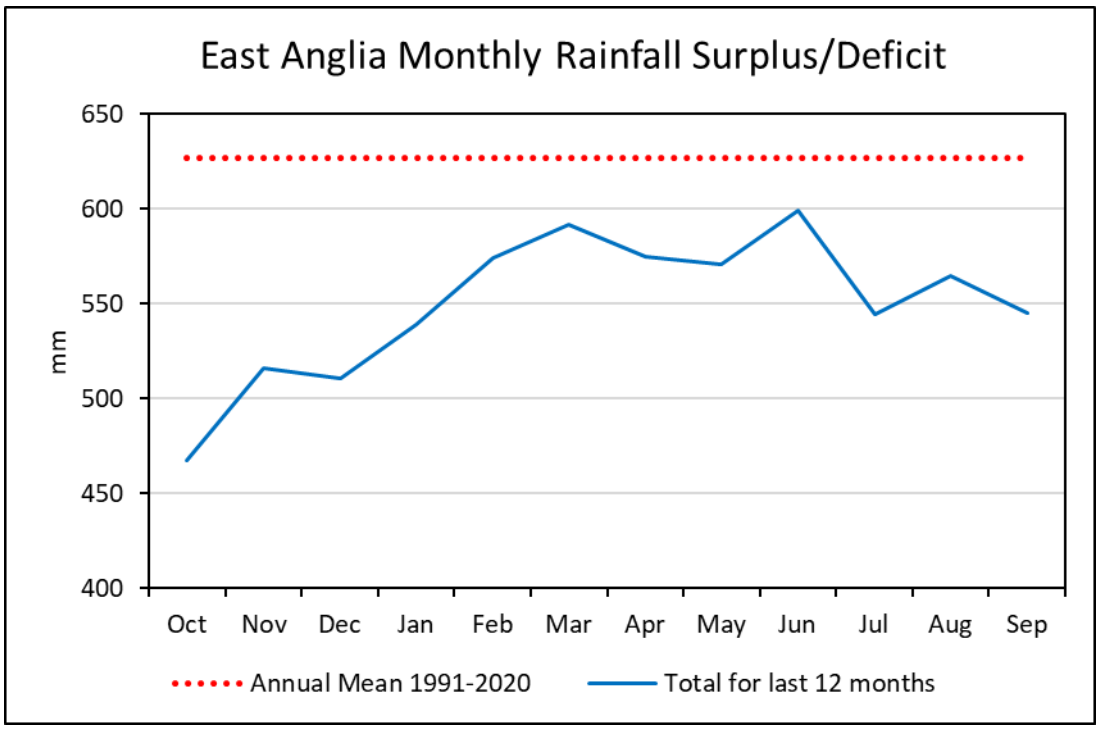




Rainfall data for Jan 2025 onwards, extracted from Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges. (Source: Environment Agency. Crown Copyright, 2026). Rainfall data prior to Jan 2025, extracted from Met Office HadUK 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from registered rain gauges (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026).

2.3 Monthly rainfall surplus deficit chart

Figure 0.3: Rainfall total for the last 12 months compared to the 1991 to 2020 long term average for East Anglia.

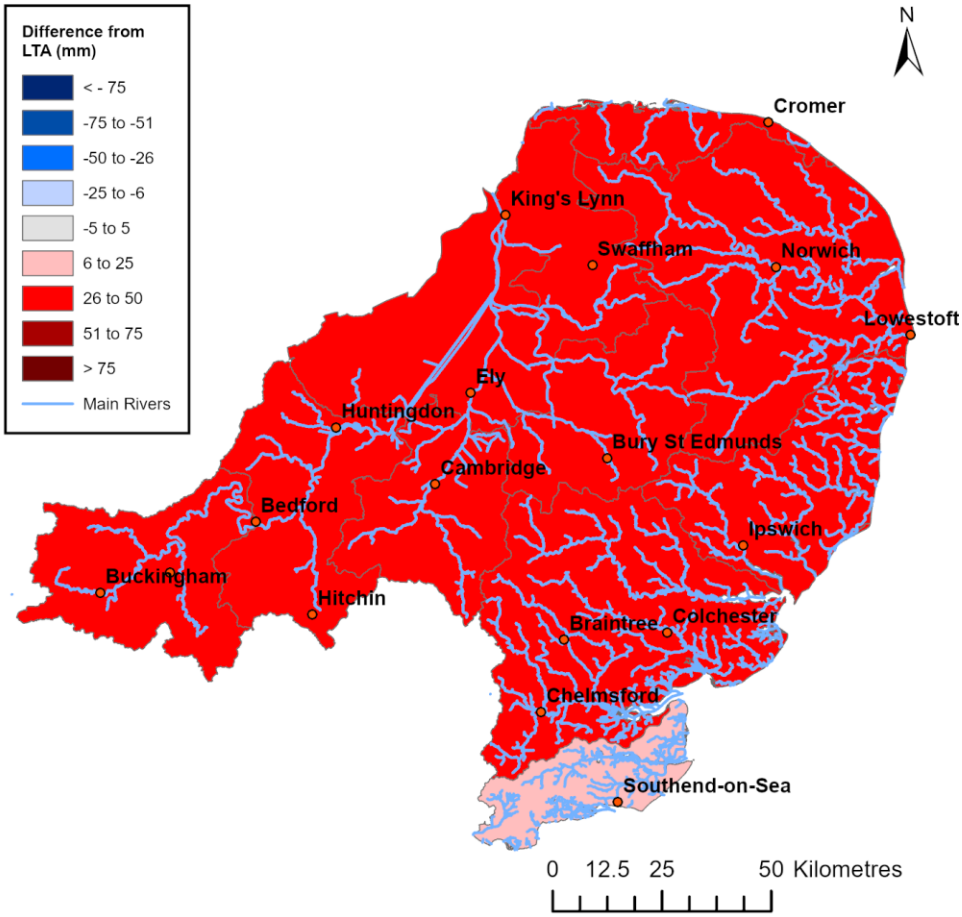


Rainfall data for Jan 2025 onwards, extracted from Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges. (Source: Environment Agency. Crown Copyright, 2026). Rainfall data prior to Jan 2025, extracted from Met Office HadUK 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from registered rain gauges (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026).

3 Soil moisture deficit

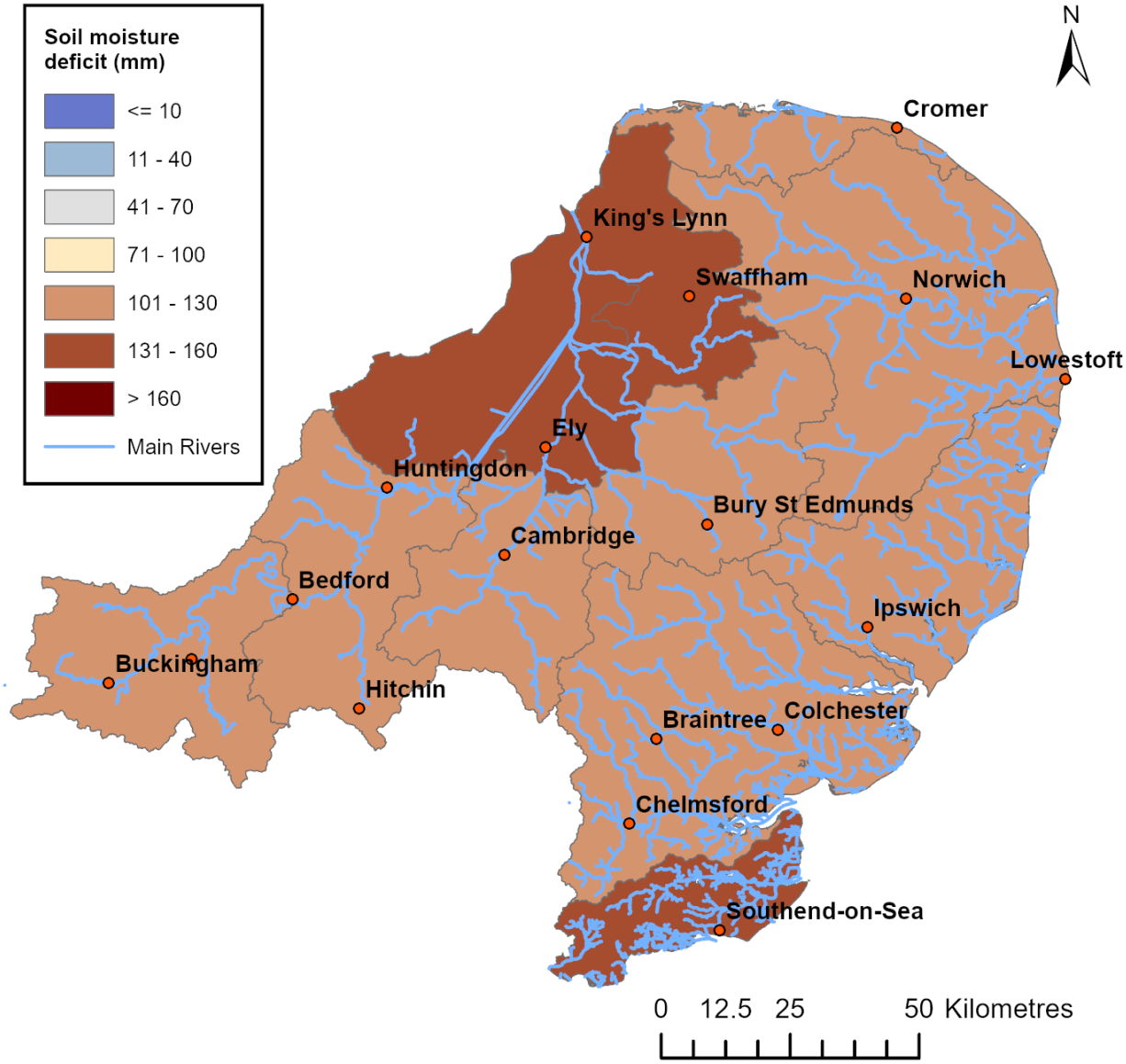
3.1 Soil moisture deficit map

Figure 3.1a: Soil moisture deficit values for 30 September 2026. Values based on the weekly MORECS data for real land use.



(Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026). Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, AC0000807064, 2026.

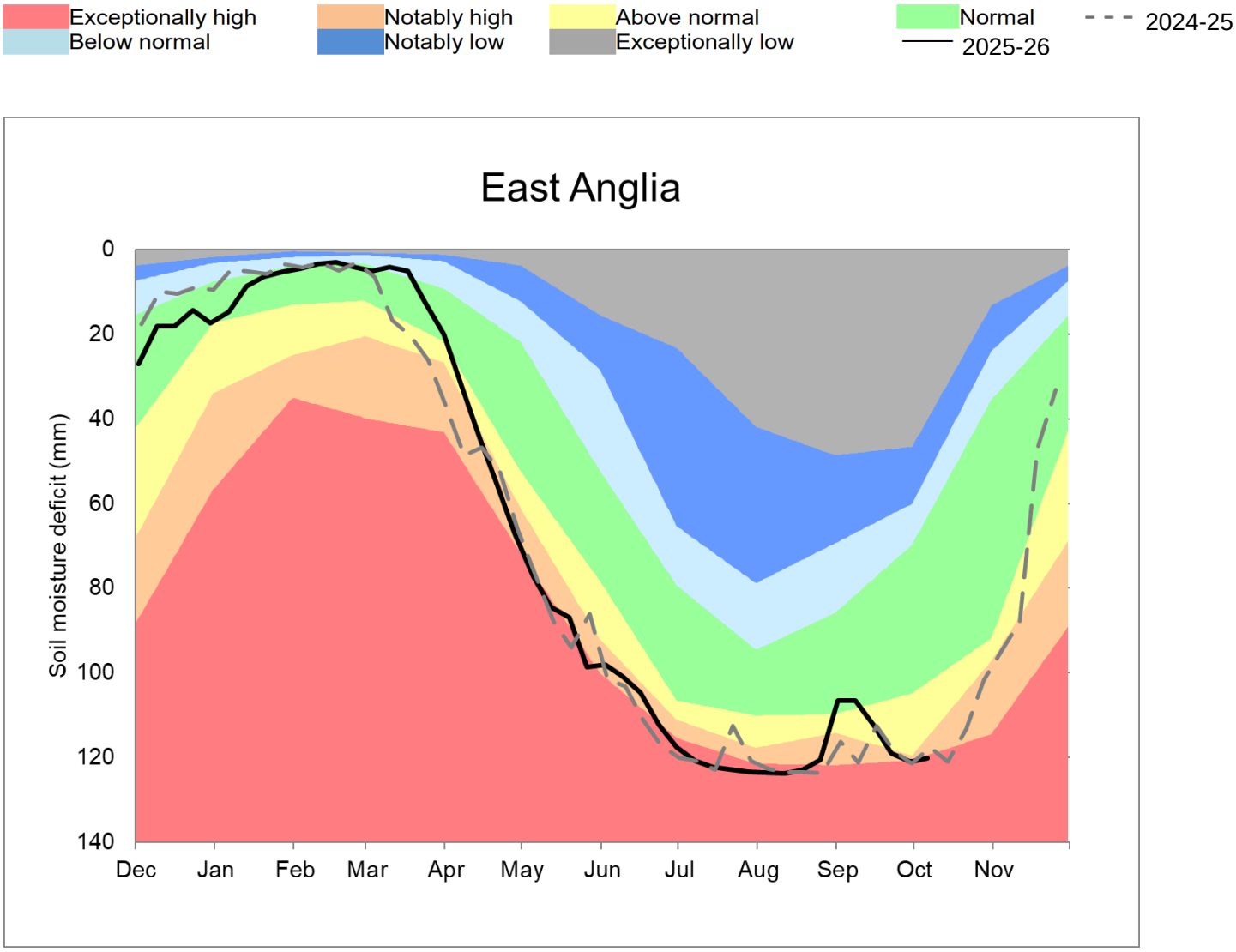
Figure 3.1b A map displaying soil moisture deficit values for 30 September 2026 relative to long term average end of September soil moisture deficit values for hydrometric catchements across East Anglia. Values based on the weekly MORECS data for real land use.



(Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026). Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, AC0000807064, 2026.

3.2 Soil moisture deficit charts

Figure 3.2: Latest soil moisture deficit compared to an analysis of historic 1991 to 2020 long term data set. Weekly MORECS data for real land use.

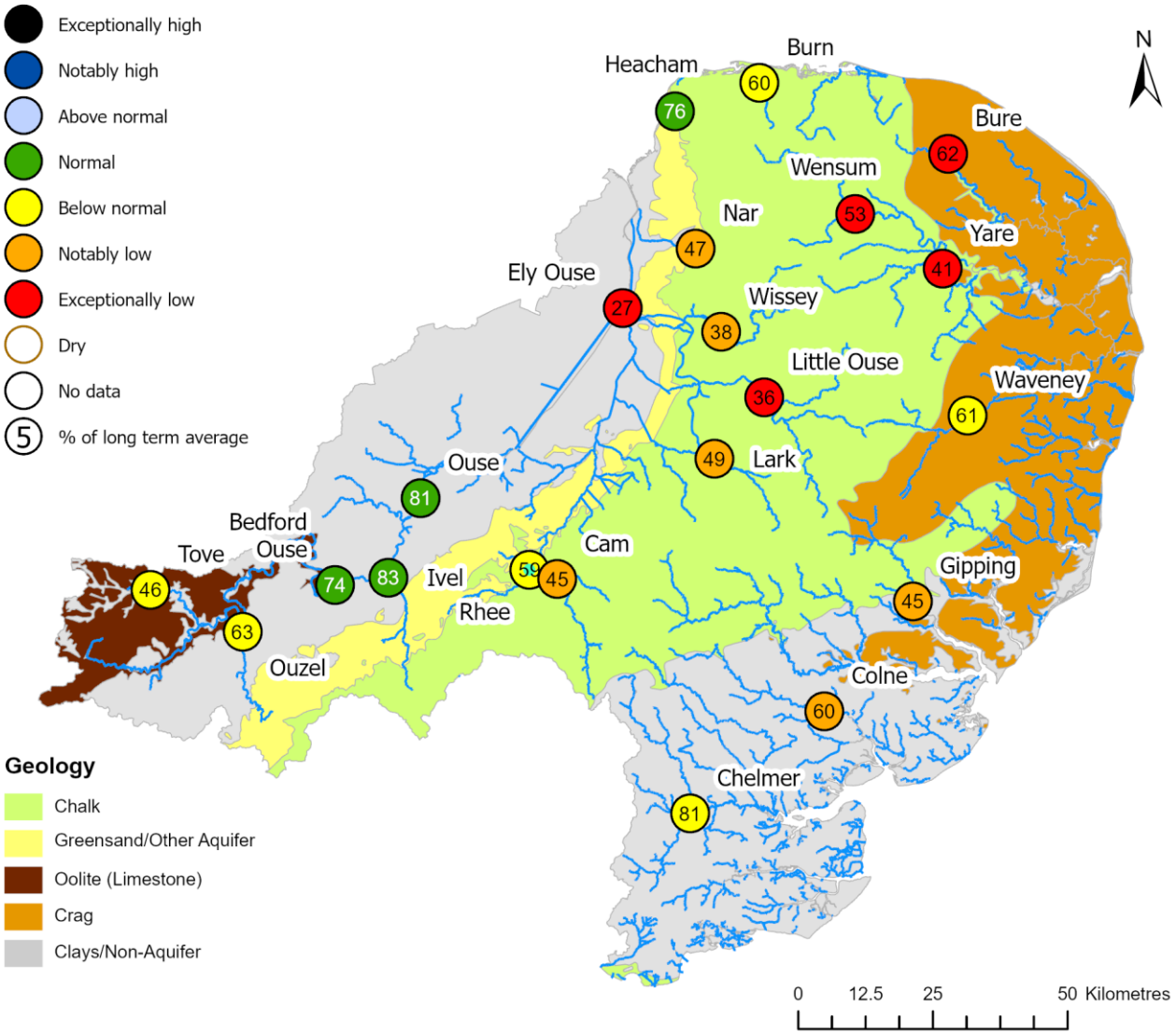


(Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026). All rights reserved. Environment Agency, AC0000807064, 2026.

4 River flows

4.1 River flows map

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



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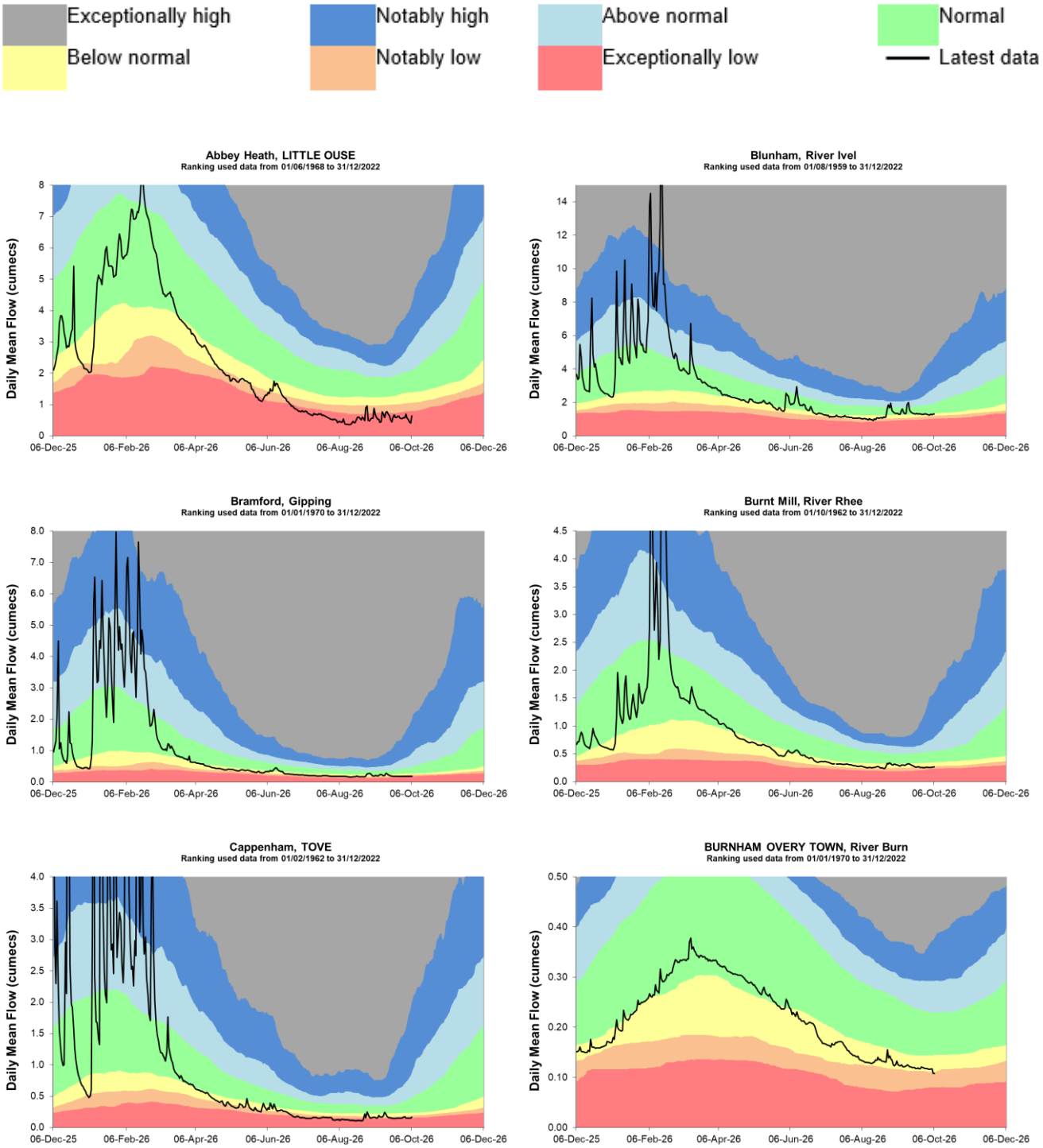
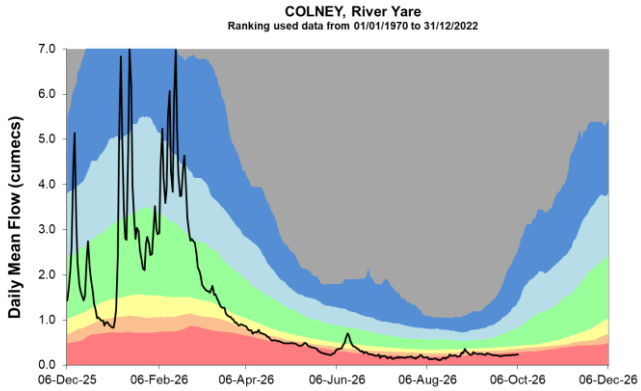
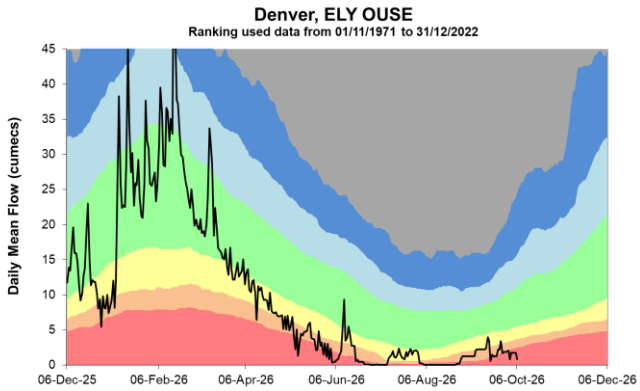
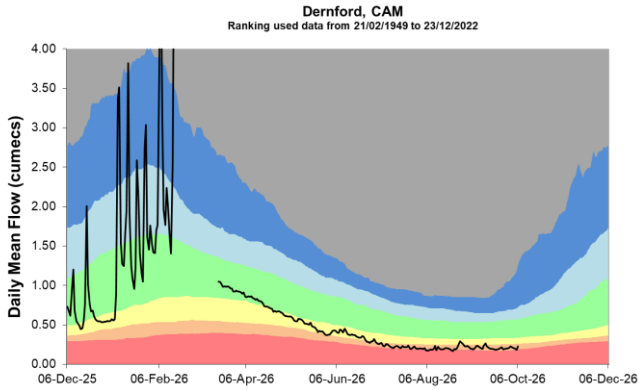
4.2 River flow charts

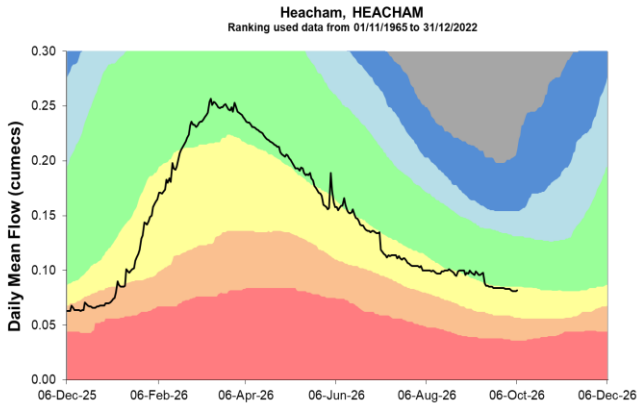
Figure 4.2: Daily mean river flow for index sites over the past year, compared to an analysis of historic daily mean flows.

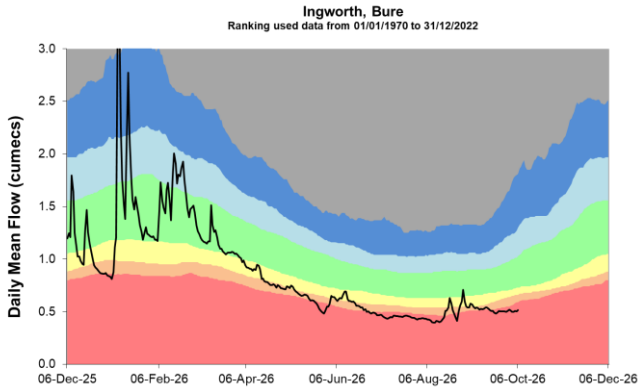


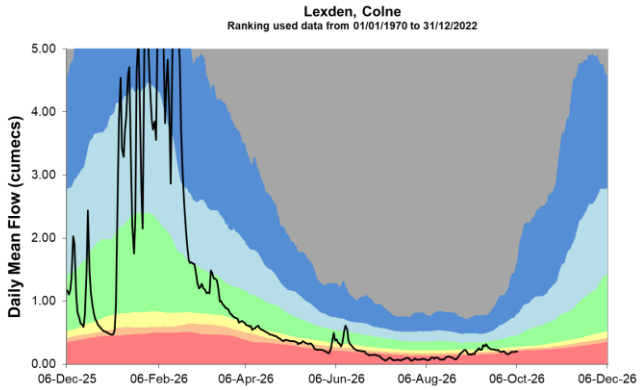

COLNEY, River Yare
Ranking used data from 01/01/1970 to 31/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
7.0
6.0
5.0
4.0
3.0
2.0
1.0
0.0
06-Dec-25
06-Feb-26
06-Apr-26
06-Jun-26
06-Aug-26
06-Oct-26
06-Dec-26

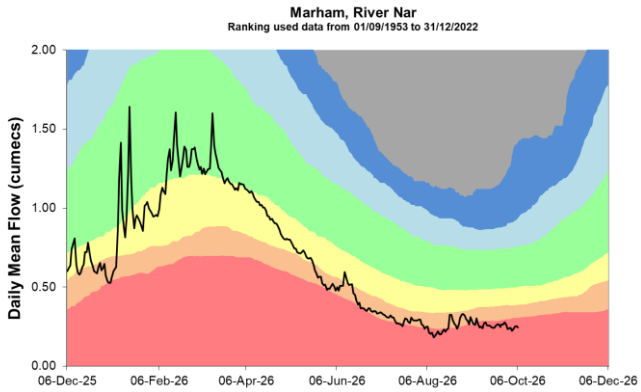

Denver, ELY OUSE
Ranking used data from 01/11/1971 to 31/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
06-Dec-25
06-Feb-26
06-Apr-26
06-Jun-26
06-Aug-26
06-Oct-26
06-Dec-26

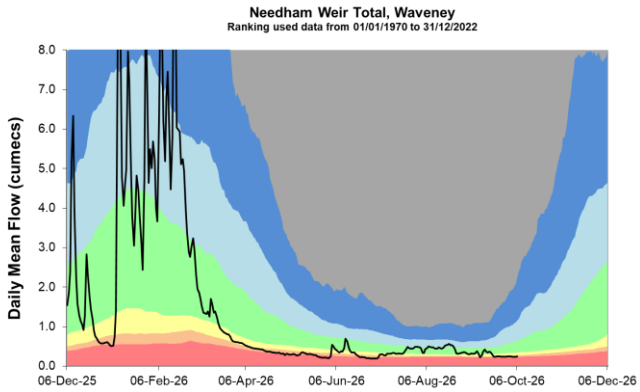

Dernford, CAM
Ranking used data from 21/02/1949 to 23/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
4.00
3.50
3.00
2.50
2.00
1.50
1.00
0.50
0.00
06-Dec-25
06-Feb-26
06-Apr-26
06-Jun-26
06-Aug-26
06-Oct-26
06-Dec-26

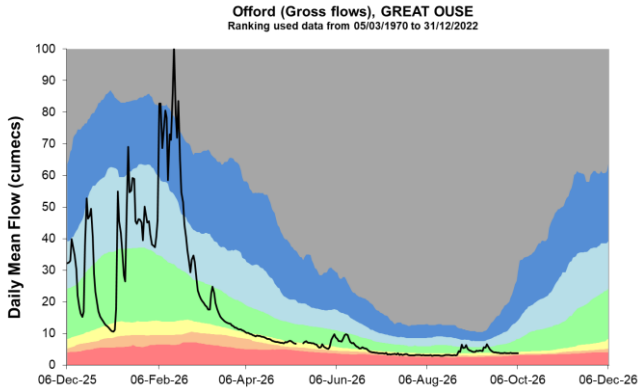

Heacham, HEACHAM
Ranking used data from 01/11/1965 to 31/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
0.30
0.25
0.20
0.15
0.10
0.05
0.00
06-Dec-25
06-Feb-26
06-Apr-26
06-Jun-26
06-Aug-26
06-Oct-26
06-Dec-26

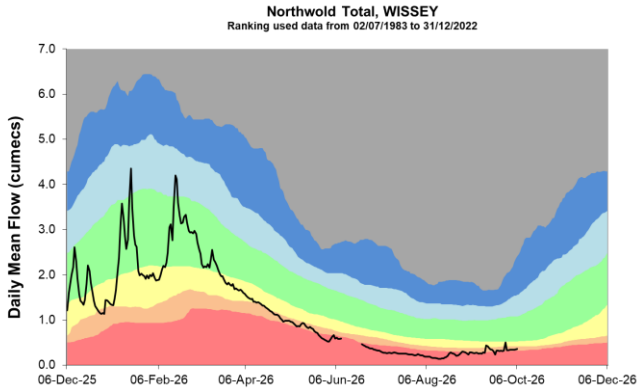

Ingworth, Bure
Ranking used data from 01/01/1970 to 31/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
3.0
2.5
2.0
1.5
1.0
0.5
0.0
06-Dec-25
06-Feb-26
06-Apr-26
06-Jun-26
06-Aug-26
06-Oct-26
06-Dec-26

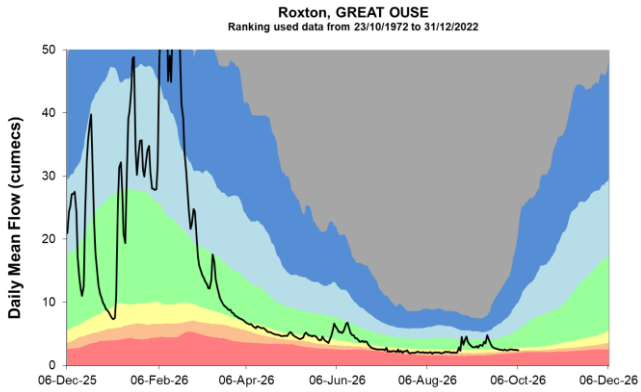

Lexden, Colne
Ranking used data from 01/01/1970 to 31/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
5.00
4.00
3.00
2.00
1.00
0.00
06-Dec-25
06-Feb-26
06-Apr-26
06-Jun-26
06-Aug-26
06-Oct-26
06-Dec-26

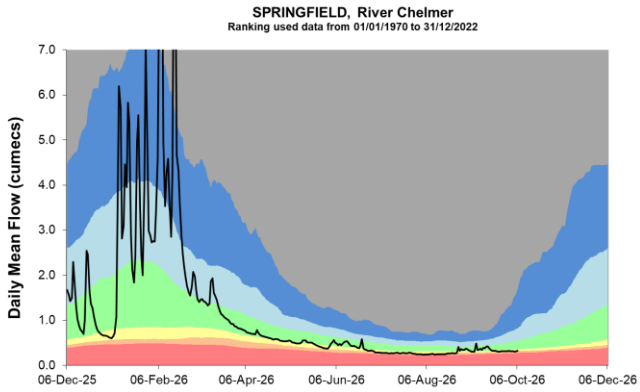

Marham, River Nar
Ranking used data from 01/09/1953 to 31/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
2.00
1.50
1.00
0.50
0.00
06-Dec-25
06-Feb-26
06-Apr-26
06-Jun-26
06-Aug-26
06-Oct-26
06-Dec-26

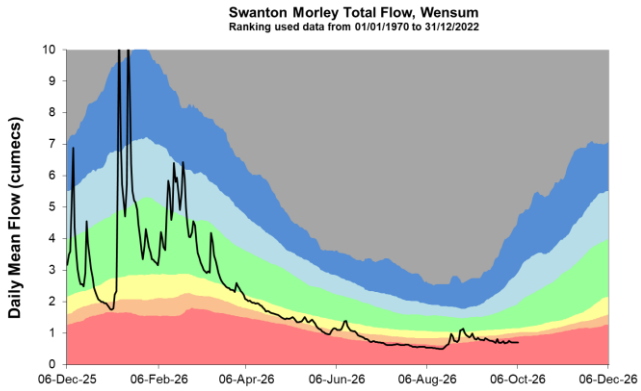

Needham Weir Total, Waveney
Ranking used data from 01/01/1970 to 31/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
8.0
7.0
6.0
5.0
4.0
3.0
2.0
1.0
0.0
06-Dec-25
06-Feb-26
06-Apr-26
06-Jun-26
06-Aug-26
06-Oct-26
06-Dec-26

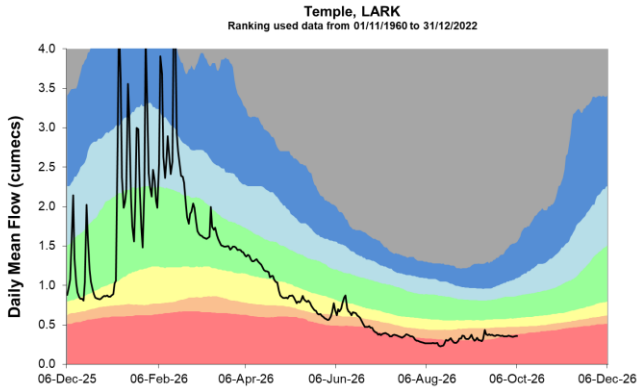


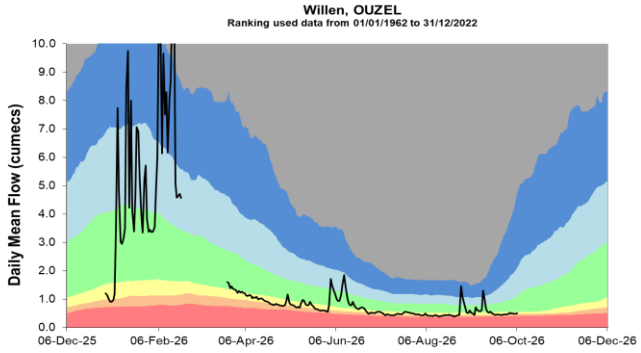










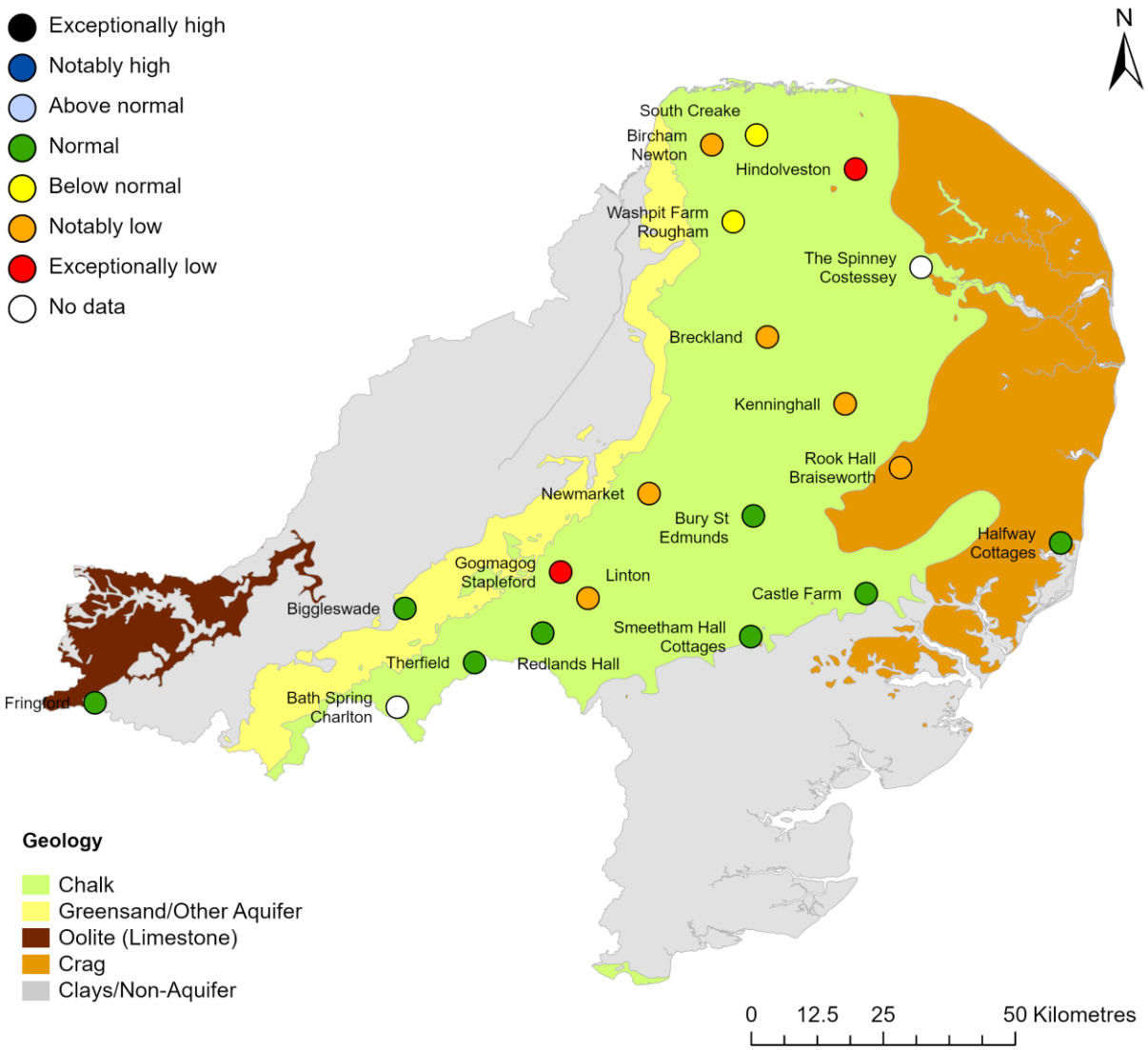


(Source: Environment Agency).

5 Groundwater levels

5.1 Groundwater levels map

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



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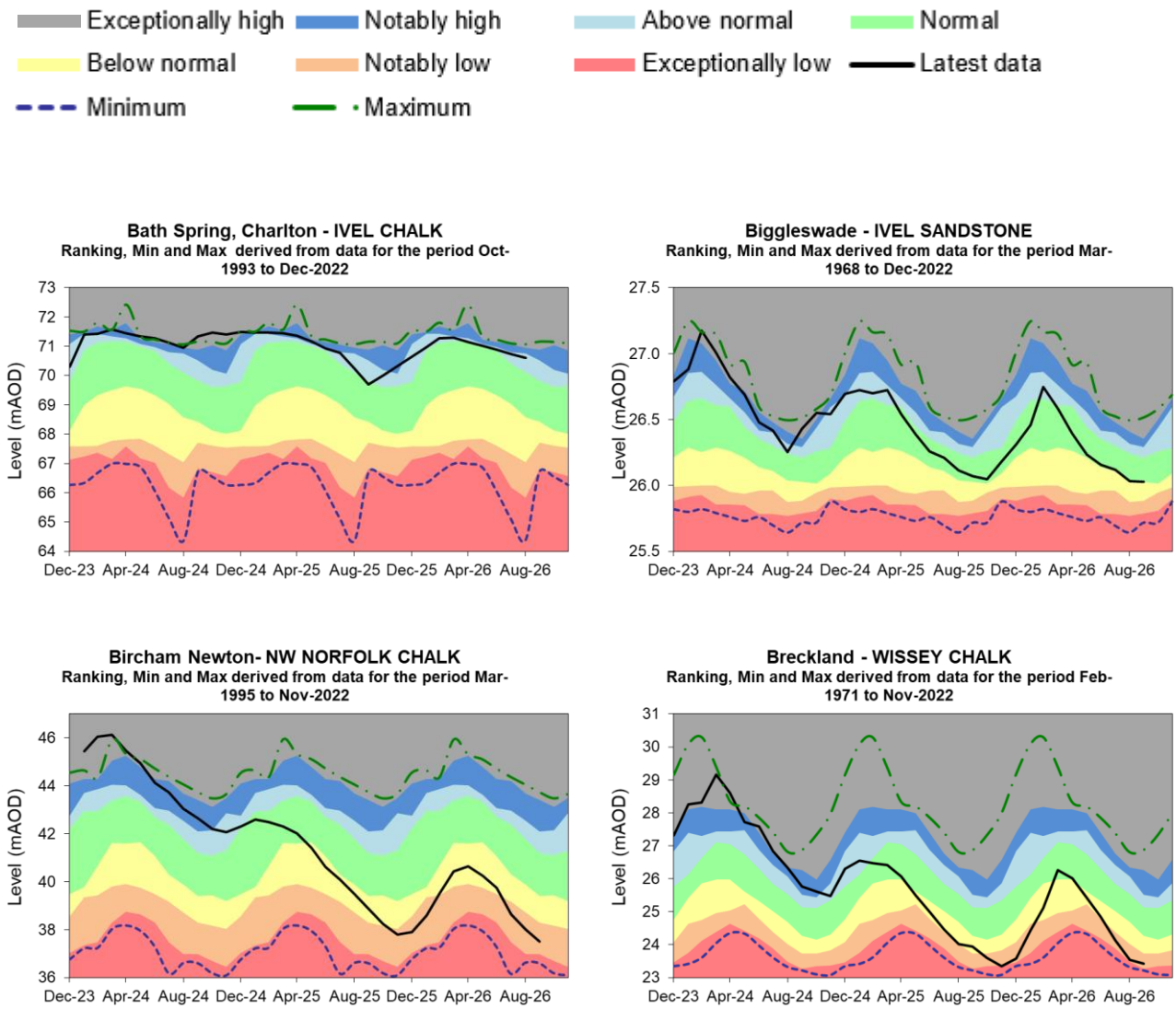
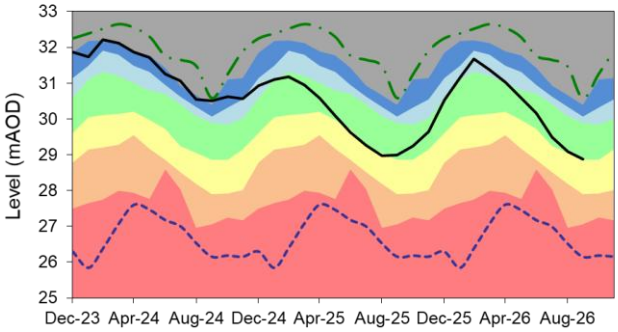
5.2 Groundwater level charts

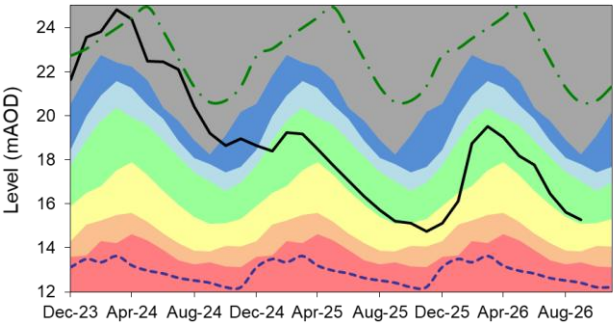
Figure 5.2: End of month groundwater levels at index groundwater level sites for major aquifers. 34 months compared to an analysis of historic end of month levels and long term maximum and minimum levels.



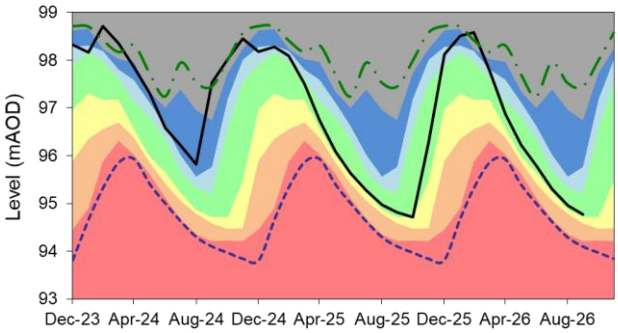
Bury St Edmunds - UPPER LARK CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period May-1983 to Dec-2022



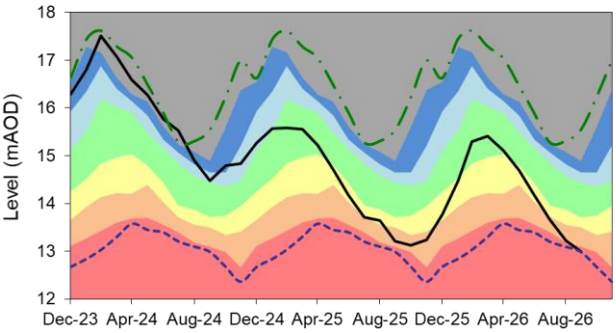
Castle Farm, Offton - MID SUFFOLK CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Mar-1967 to Nov-2022



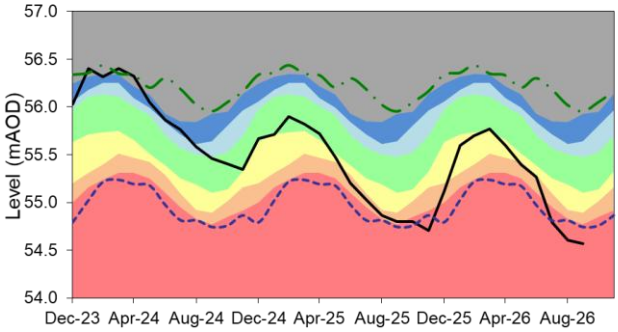
Fringford - GREAT OOLITE
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Sep-1980 to Dec-2022



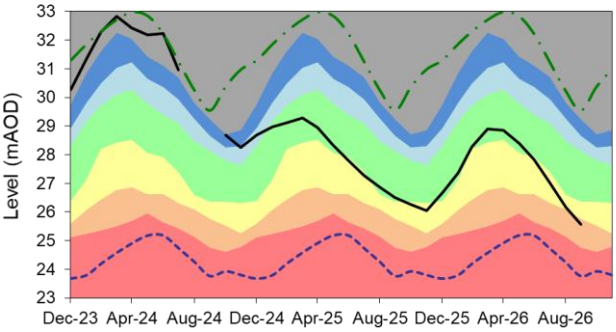
Gog Magog, Stapleford - CAM CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Jan-1980 to Dec-2022



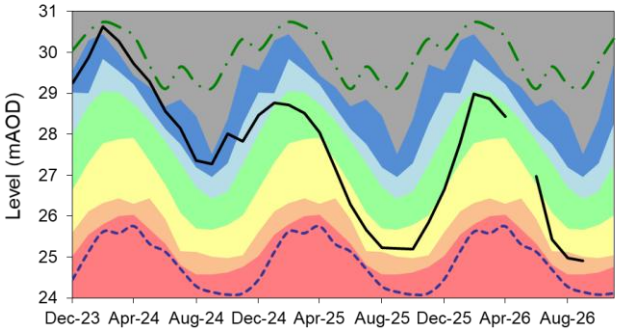
Hindolveston - NORFOLK CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Sep-1984 to Nov-2022



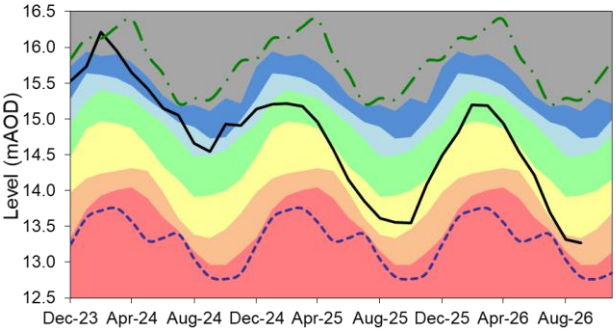
Kenninghall - LITTLE OUSE CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Aug-1973 to Dec-2022



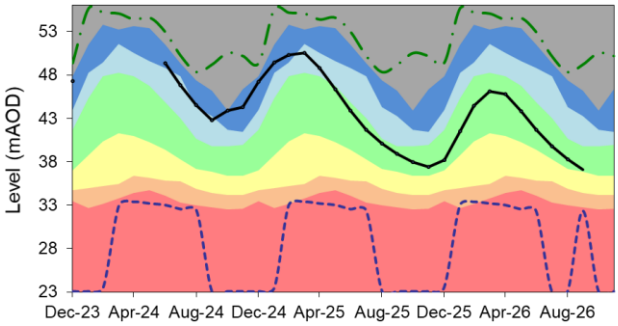
Linton- CAM CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Jan-1980 to Dec-2022



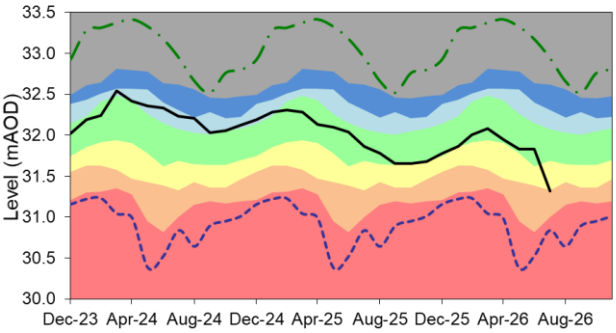
Newmarket - SNAIL CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Feb-1983 to Dec-2022



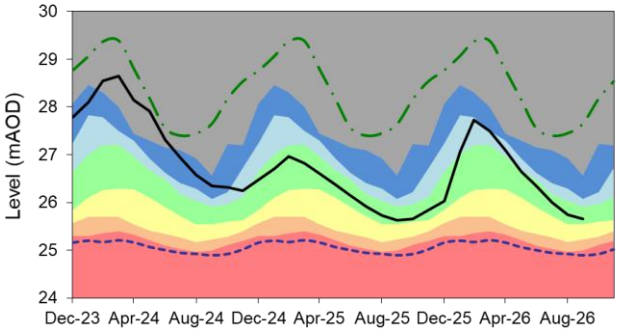
Redlands Hall, Ickleton - CAM CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Aug-1963 to Dec-2022



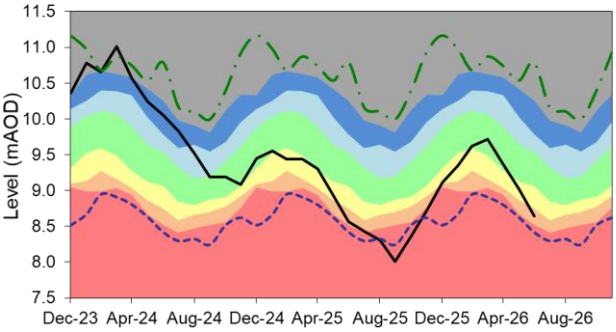
Rook Hall, Braiseworth- SUFFOLK CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Jan-1980 to Nov-2022

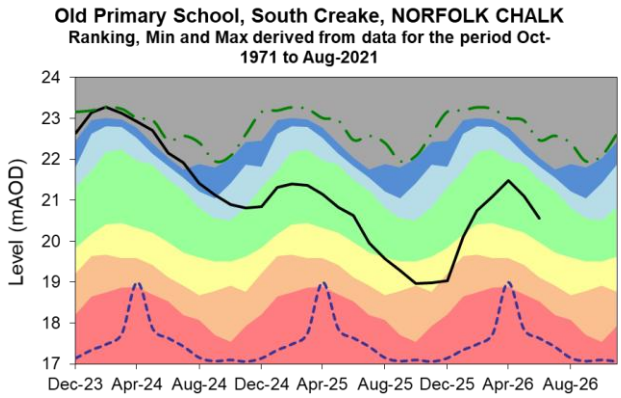


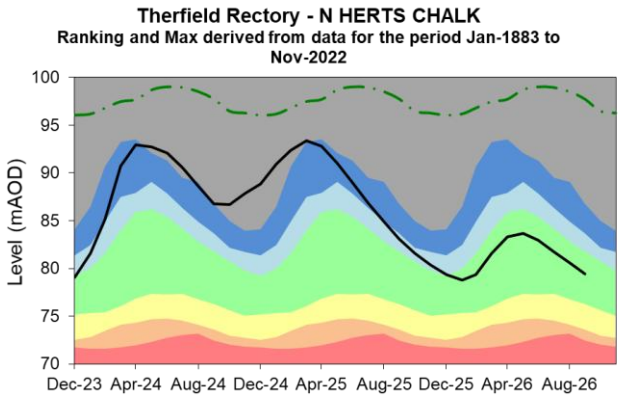
Smeetham Hall Cottages, Bulmer - ESSEX CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Jan-1964 to Jul-2022

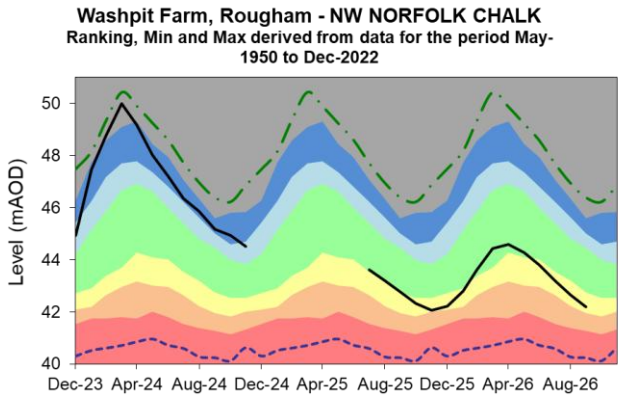


The Spinney, Costessey- WENSUM CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Oct-1971 to Nov-2022







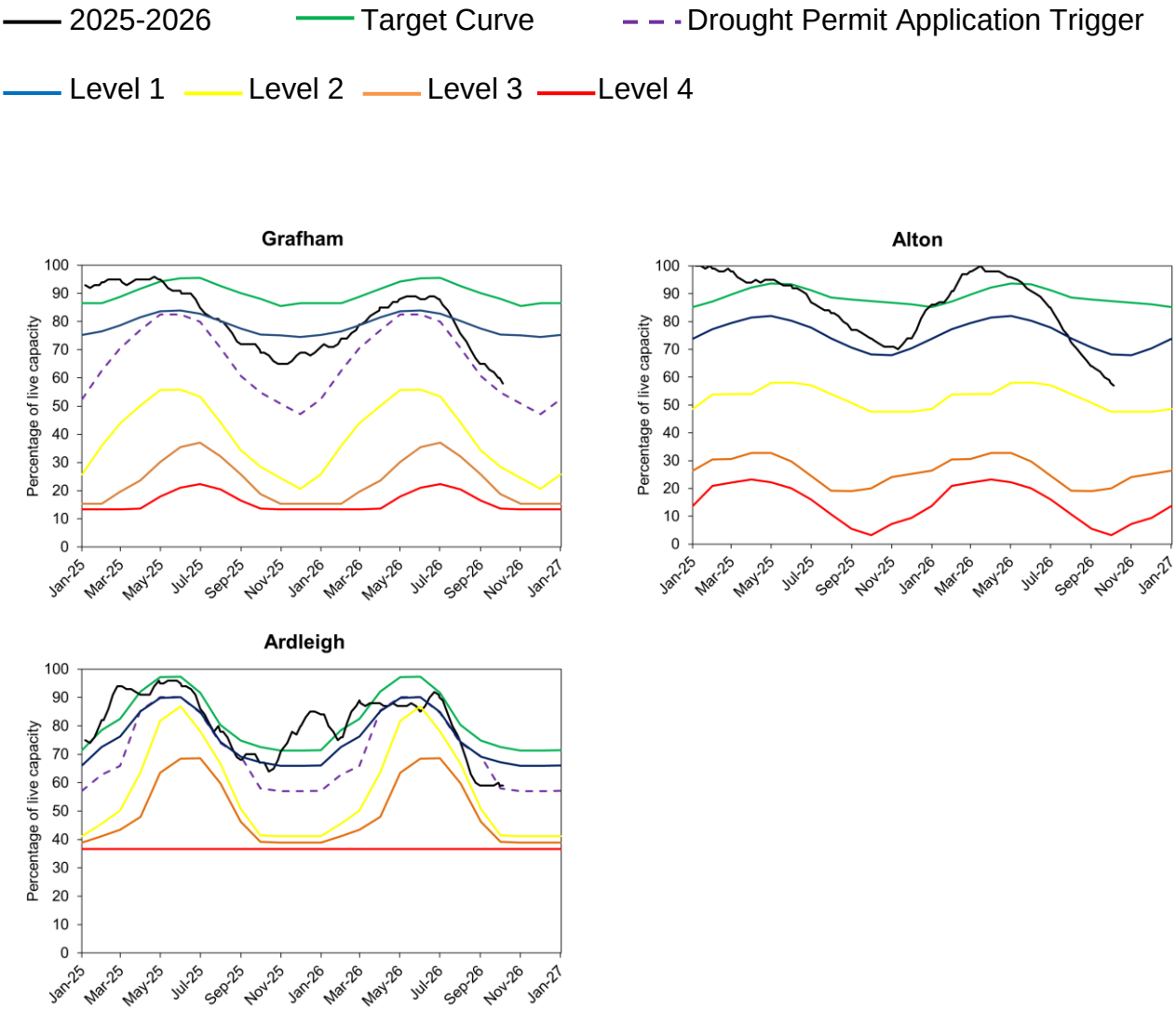


(Source: Environment Agency,2026).

6 Reservoir stocks

6.1 Anglian Water

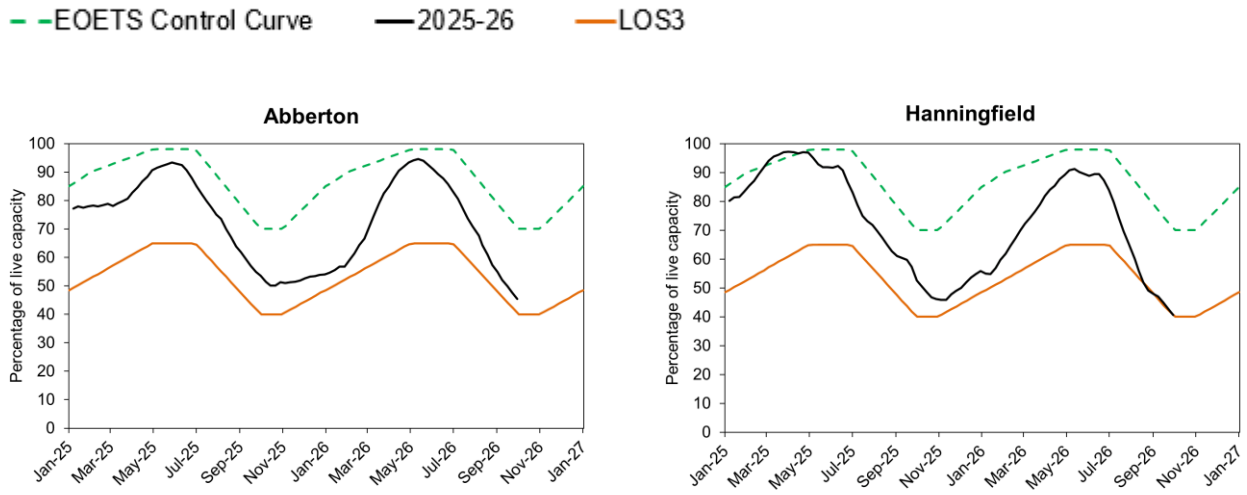
Figure 6.1: End of month regional reservoir stocks compared to the target curve and drought permit application trigger.



(Source: Anglian Water. For more information on Anglian Water's reservoir levels, please view their Drought Plan).

6.2 Essex and Suffolk Water

Figure 6.2: End of month regional reservoir stocks compared to the EOETS and level of service 3 control curve.



(Source: Essex and Suffolk Water).

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^3/s).

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 1 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

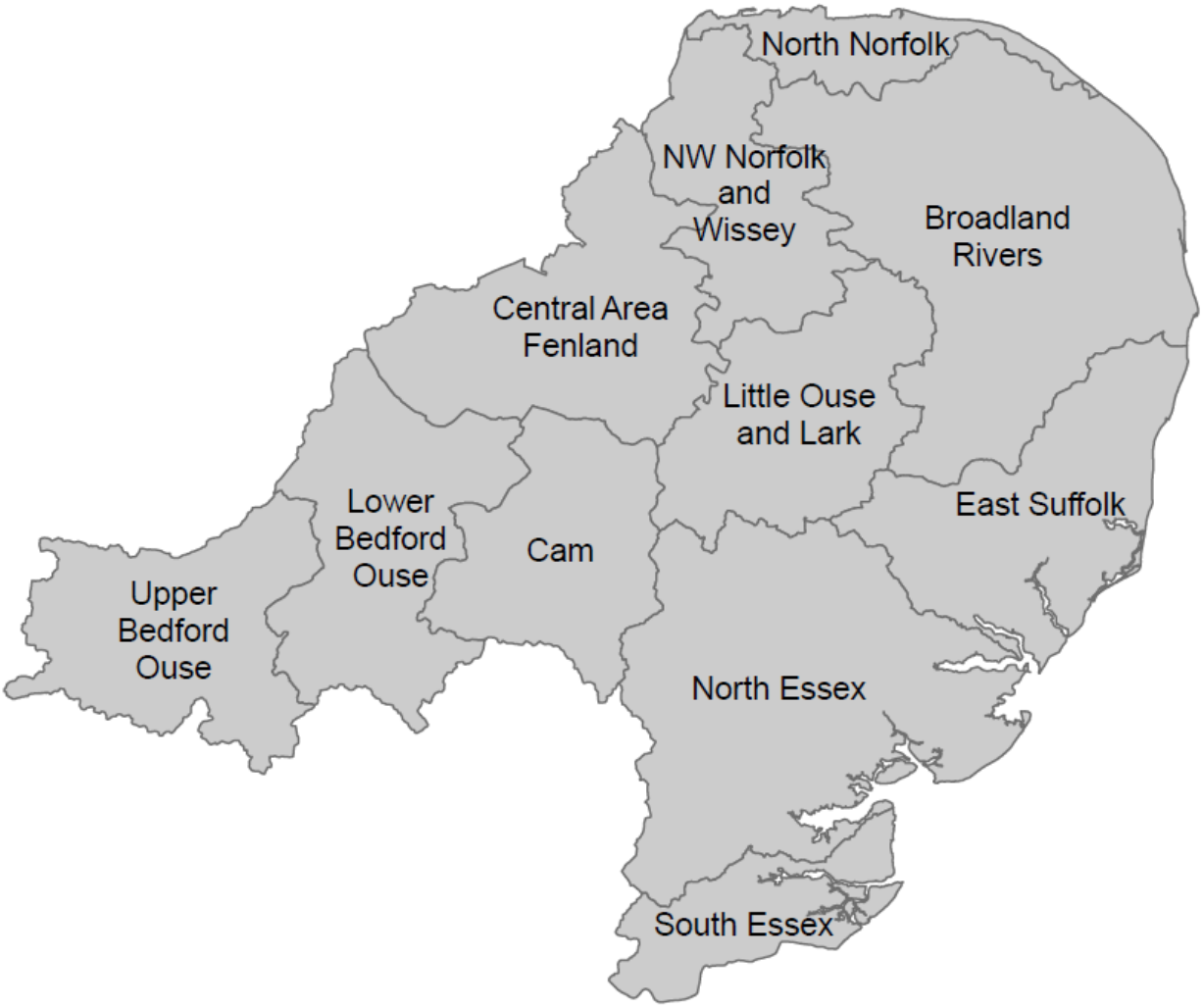
Value likely to fall within this band 8% of the time.

Exceptionally low

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

7.3 Hydrological areas

Figure 7.3: The map below shows the geographical extent of each hydrological area in East Anglia.



8 Appendices

8.1 Rainfall table

Hydrological area	Sep 2026 rainfall % of long term average 1991 to 2020	Sep 2026 band	Jul 2026 to September cumulative band	Apr 2026 to September cumulative band	Oct 2025 to September cumulative band
Broadland Rivers	50	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Below normal
Cam	60	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Below normal
Central Area Fenland	58	Below Normal	Notably low	Exceptionally low	Normal
East Suffolk	60	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Normal
Little Ouse And Lark	63	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Below normal
Lower Bedford Ouse	55	Below Normal	Notably low	Exceptionally low	Normal
North Essex	69	Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Below normal
North Norfolk	36	Notably Low	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Notably low
Nw Norfolk And Wissey	47	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Below normal

Hydrological area	Sep 2026 rainfall % of long term average 1991 to 2020	Sep 2026 band	Jul 2026 to September cumulative band	Apr 2026 to September cumulative band	Oct 2025 to September cumulative band
South Essex	76	Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Below normal
Upper Bedford Ouse	62	Below Normal	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low	Normal

8.2 River flows table

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

Site name	River	Catchment	Sep 2026 band	Aug 2026 band
Offord (gross Flows)	Great Ouse	Ouse Beds	Normal	Below normal
Roxton	Great Ouse	Ivel	Normal	Below normal
Springfield	Chelmer	Chelmer Upper	Below normal	Notably low
Swanton Morley Total	Wensum	Wensum	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low
Temple	Lark	Lark	Notably low	Exceptionally low
Willen	Ouzel	Ouzel	Below normal	Below normal

8.3 Groundwater table

Site name	Aquifer	End of Sep 2026 band	End of Aug 2026 band
Bath Spring, Charlton	Upper Ivel Chalk	No Data	Above normal
Biggleswade	Ivel Woburn Sands	Normal	Below normal
Bircham Newton	North West Norfolk Chalk	Notably low	Notably low
Breckland	Wissey Chalk	Notably low	Notably low
Bury St Edmunds	Upper Lark Chalk	Normal	Normal
Castle Farm, Offton	East Suffolk Chalk	Normal	Normal
Gog Magog, Stapleford	Cam Chalk	Exceptionally low	Notably low
Halfway Cottages	East Suffolk Crag	Normal	Normal
Hindolveston	Norfolk Chalk	Exceptionally low	Exceptionally low
Kenninghall	Little Ouse Chalk	Notably low	Below normal
Linton	Cam Chalk	Notably low	Notably low
Newmarket	Snail Chalk	Notably low	Notably low

Site name	Aquifer	End of Sep 2026 band	End of Aug 2026 band
Old Primary School, South Creake	North Norfolk Chalk	Below normal	No Data
Redlands Hall, Ickleton	Cam Chalk	Normal	Normal
Rook Hall, Braiseworth	East Suffolk Chalk	Notably low	Exceptionally low
Smeetham Hall Cottages, Bulmer	North Essex Chalk	Normal	Normal
The Spinney, Costessey	Wensum Chalk	No Data	No Data
Washpit Farm, Rougham	North West Norfolk Chalk	Below normal	Below normal
Therfield Rectory	Upper Lee Chalk	Normal	Normal
Fringford P.s.	Upper Bedford Ouse Oolitic Limestone (great)	Normal	Normal