



Dorset
Wildlife Trust





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Troubled Waters

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Headlines

- Dorset has 1,049 km of rivers but less than 15% are in good ecological condition
- 85% of the world's chalk streams are found in England and Dorset's are the most south-westerly.
- 75% of England's chalk streams show evidence of physical damage
- Priority freshwater habitats make up less than 1% of Dorset's area



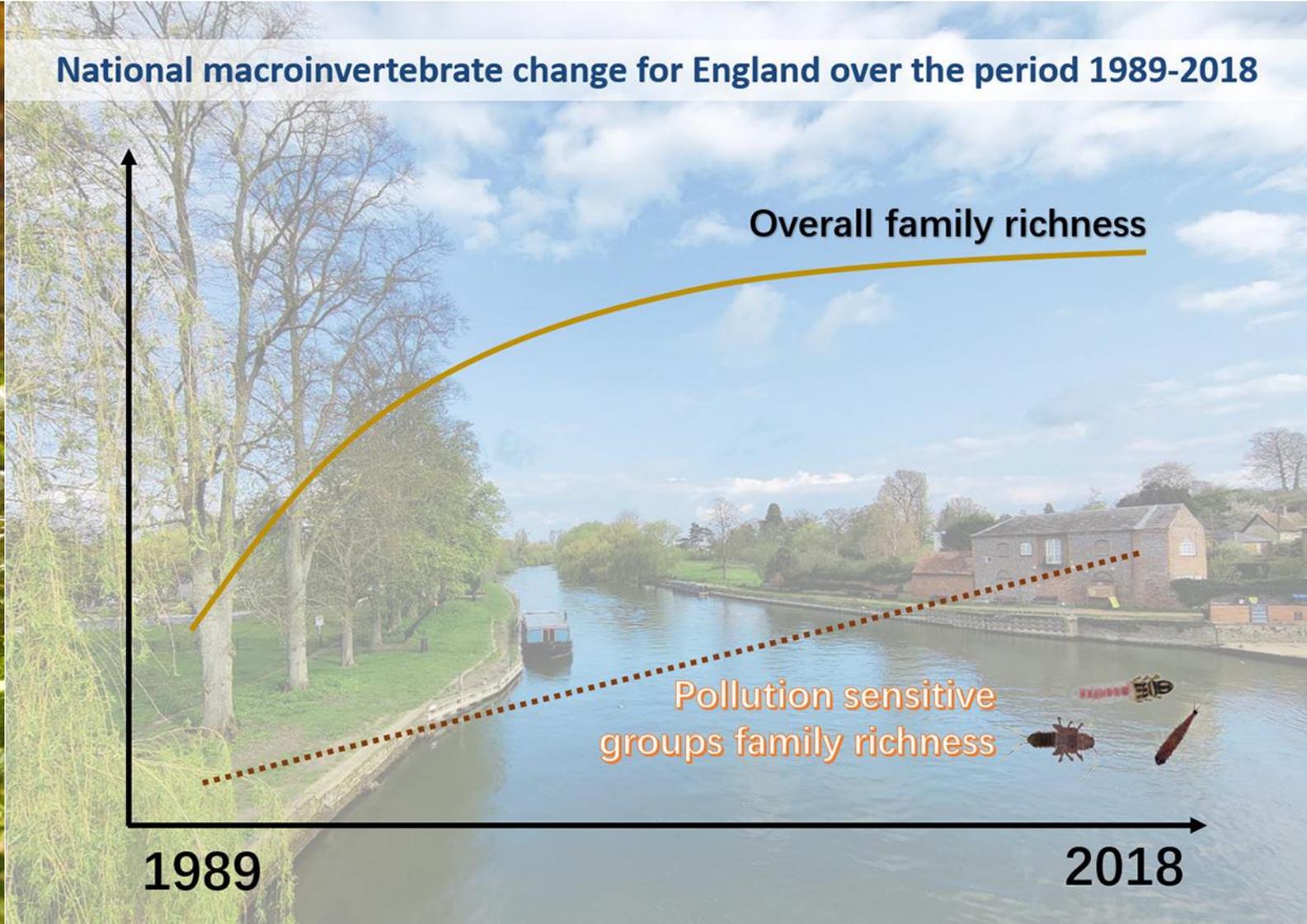


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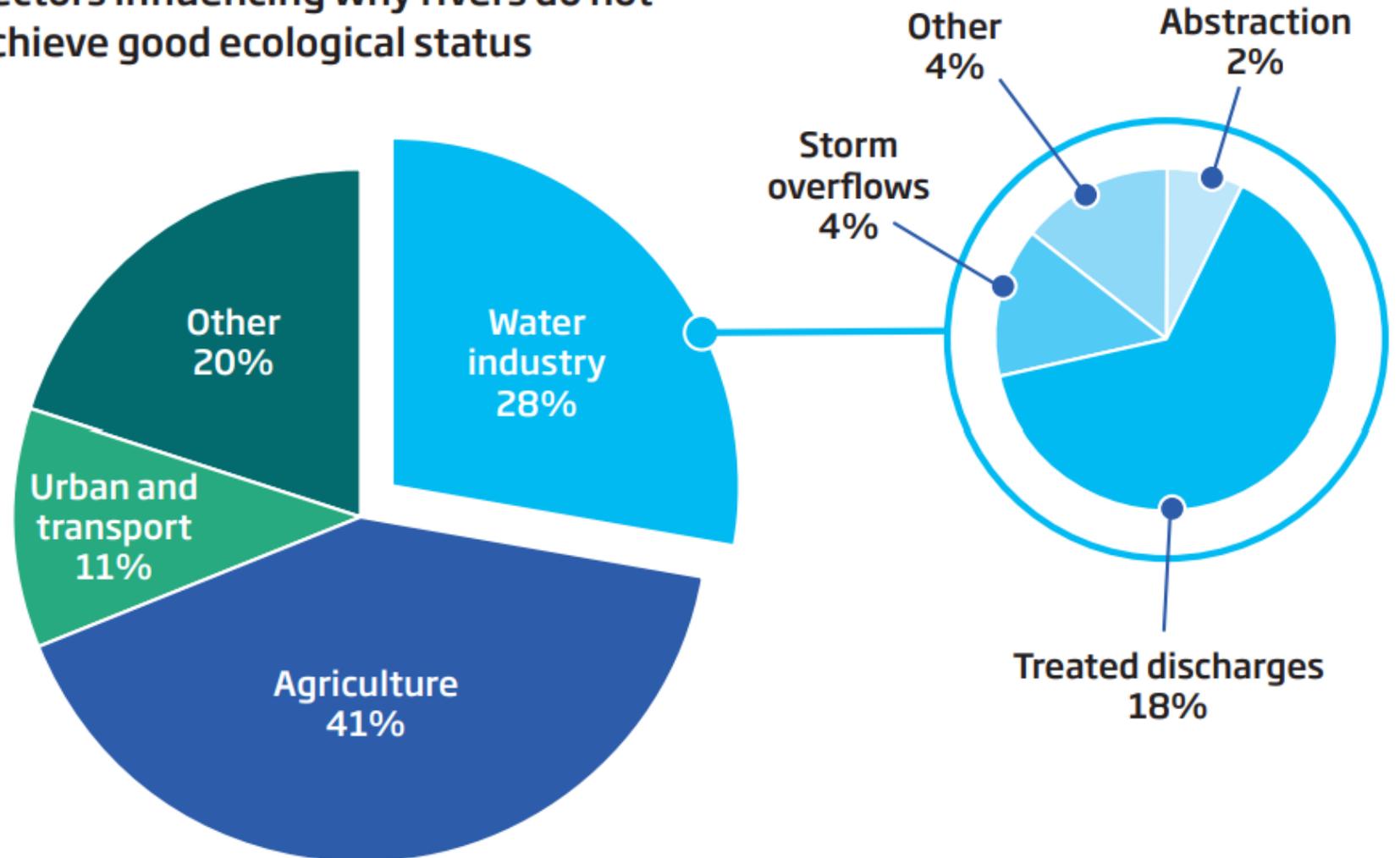
Otters have recovered after historic declines caused by poisoning.
From presence in 6% of survey sites in 1970 to 96% in 2018

Invertebrate numbers have increased



Why are rivers not in good ecological condition?

Sectors influencing why rivers do not achieve good ecological status



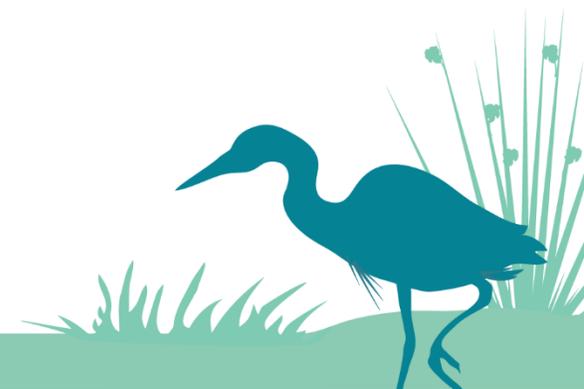


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Soils and sediment

- Smothers breeding and refuge sites
- Clogs gills
- Brings other pollutants and nutrients with it

- Also can damage roads, block culverts and increase flood risk
- And is not growing food if it's in the river!



Nutrients

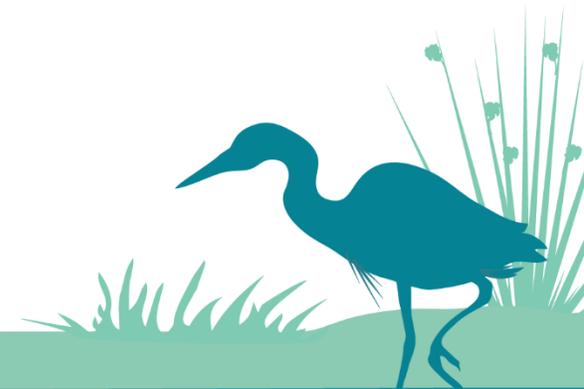
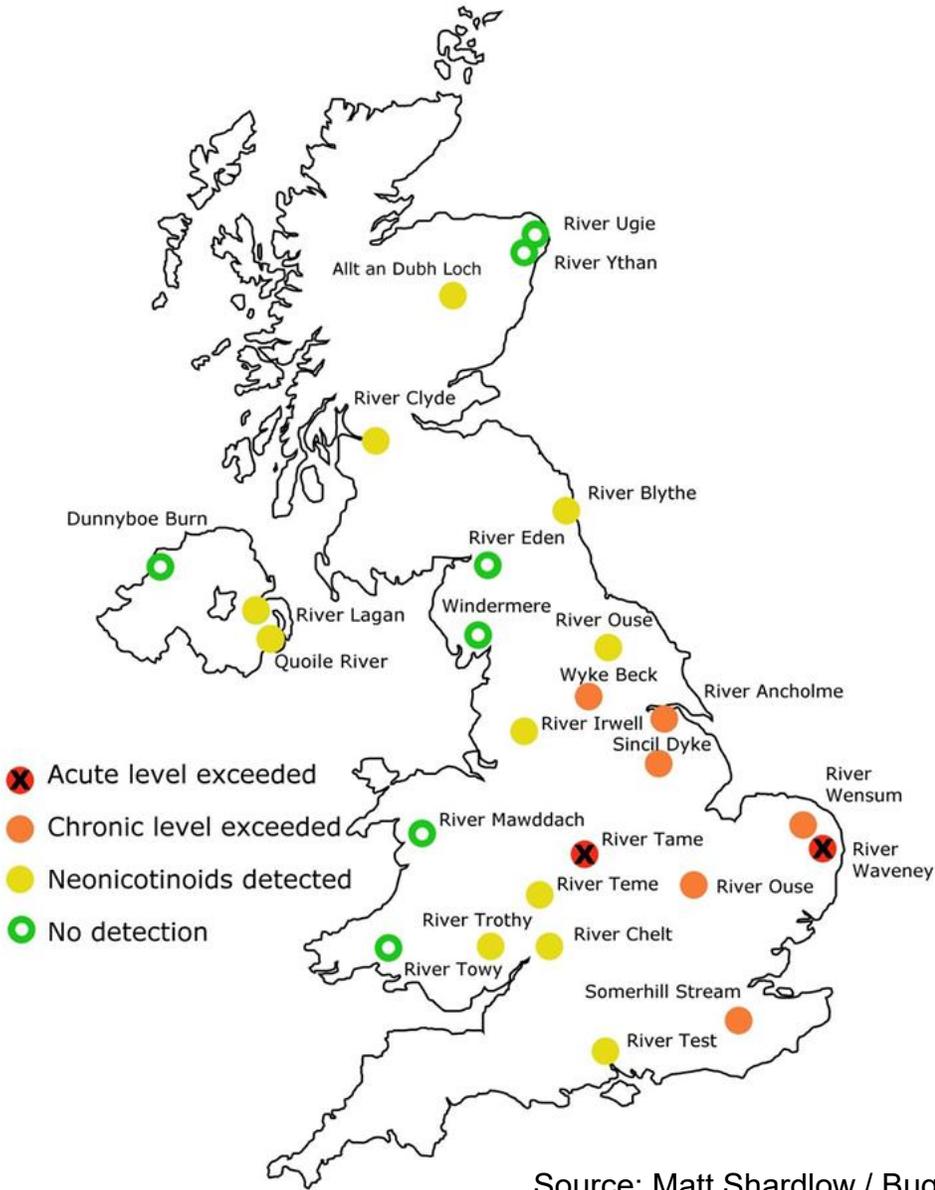


Figure 20 - Location of British Watch List monitoring sites and neonicotinoid status (updated to show Northern Ireland sites).



Chemicals

- Pesticides
- Road run-off
- Pharmaceuticals
- 'Forever' chemicals

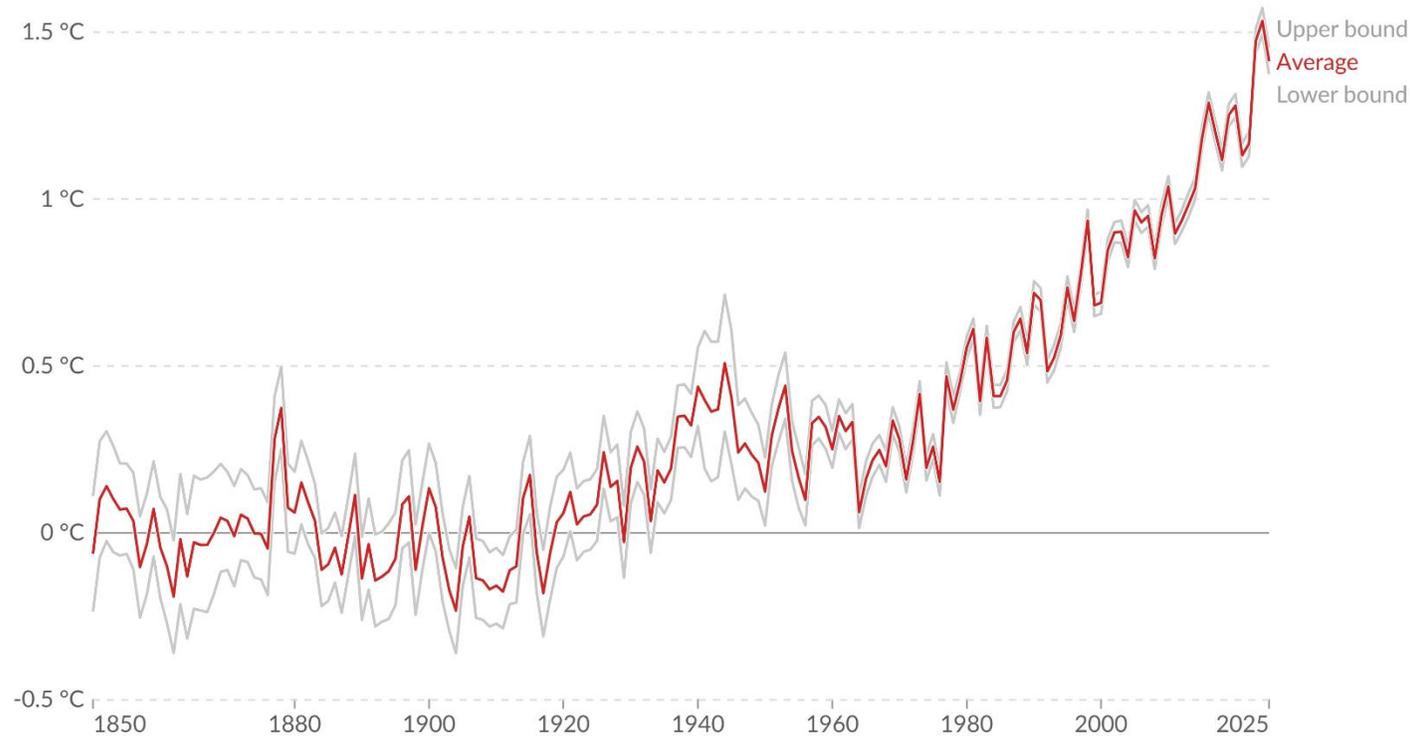


Climate Change

Temperature change relative to the pre-industrial period, World

Our World
in Data

Temperature anomaly, measured as the difference between the average land-sea surface temperature in a given year and the 1861-1890 mean, in degrees Celsius.



Data source: Met Office Hadley Centre - HadCRUT5 (2026)

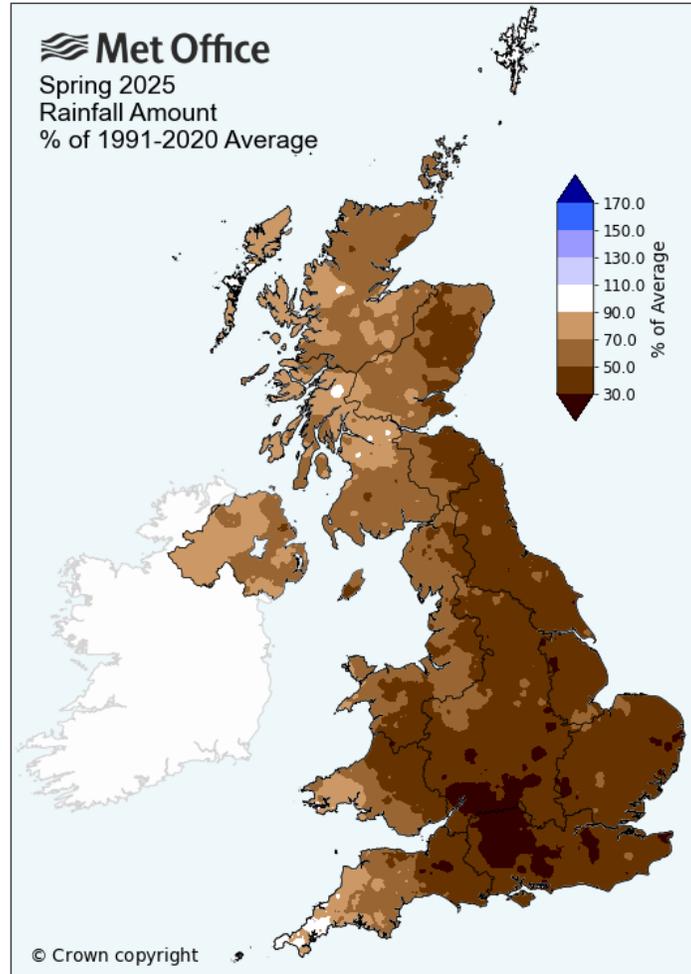
OurWorldinData.org/co2-and-greenhouse-gas-emissions | CC BY

Note: The period 1861-1890 is used as the baseline to measure temperature changes relative to pre-industrial times, [as recommended by the source](#).

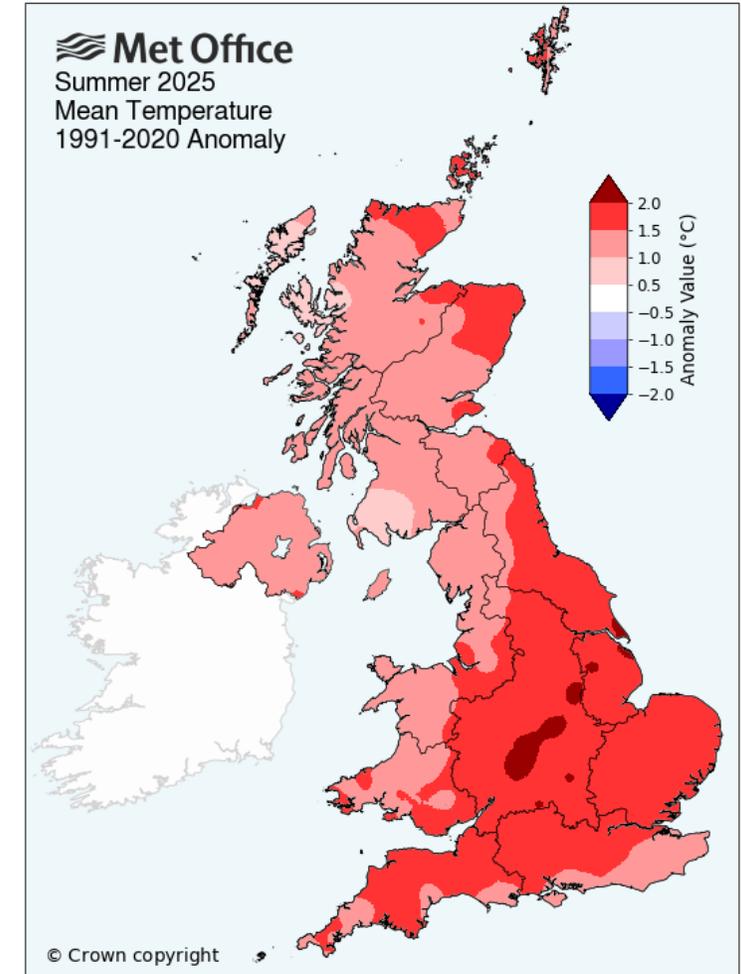


Extreme Weather - 2025

Driest spring
for England in
more than
100 years



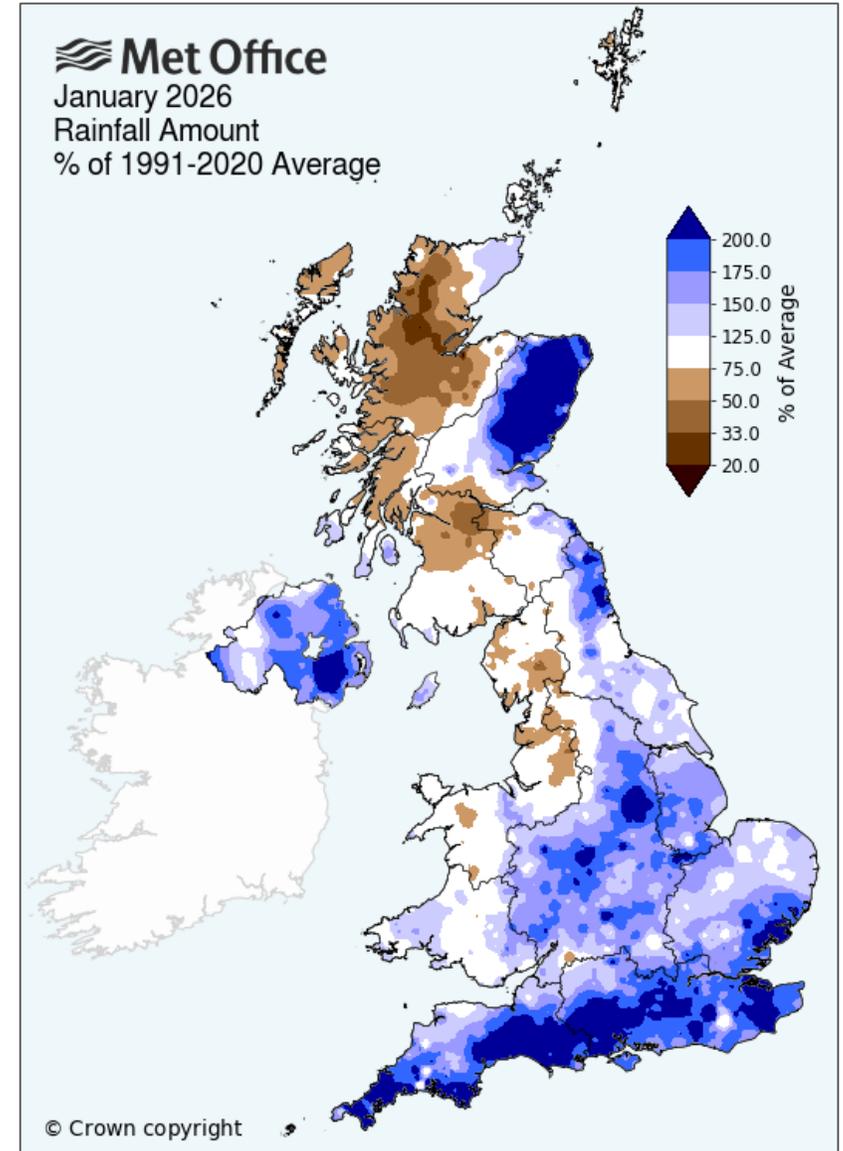
Hottest
summer on
record for
England with
an average
temperature
1.69°C above
the long-term
average



Extreme Weather

January 2026

- Rainfall in Dorset England over double the January average
- Storm Chandra caused some parts of Dorset to see 3x their monthly average rain in just 2 days
- Both surface and groundwater flooding



Extreme weather events



Calls for Action



Government Action

- 25 Year Environment Plan (2018)
- Environmental Improvement Plan (2023 & 2025)
- Water (Special Measures) Act 2024
- Cunliffe Review 2025 – 88 Recommendations
- ‘Forever’ chemicals action plan announced February 2026
- Water White Paper 2026





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Local Action



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Dorset
Catchment Partnerships

A partnership of organisations with a shared vision of Dorset's river catchments being sustainably healthy, resilient and safe for people and wildlife.

[Read our Catchment Strategy >](#)

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Water White Paper 2026

- Focus on water companies
- Recognition for need for join up
- Chalk streams mentioned but nature has a low profile
- Nature-based solutions are supported
- Promises to act on sewage sludge and pollution from intensive cattle farming





What we want to see

- A strong independent environmental regulator
- Joined up action for water and nature – wilder river banks and nature-rich river corridors
- Better enforcement of 'polluter pays'
- Consider all pressures facing our wetland environment
- More detail on addressing agricultural pollution
- Action for chalk streams – irreplaceable habitat
- Action for key species



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What you can do



Thank you for listening



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