

June 2026

Updated prospects for irrigation - forecast for Summer 2026

Overall irrigation prospects

The dry spring has contributed to a downgrade to the irrigation prospect forecast in some areas since our last report in April. Our updated irrigation prospect forecast across England for Summer 2026 is overall **Moderate to Good** as highlighted in the **Figure 1** below. This is particularly evident in parts of East Anglia and West Midlands where conditions are projected to be Moderate to Poor. The irrigation prospects reflect the water situation using current river flows, groundwater conditions, latest available weather forecasts and Met Office seasonal outlooks.

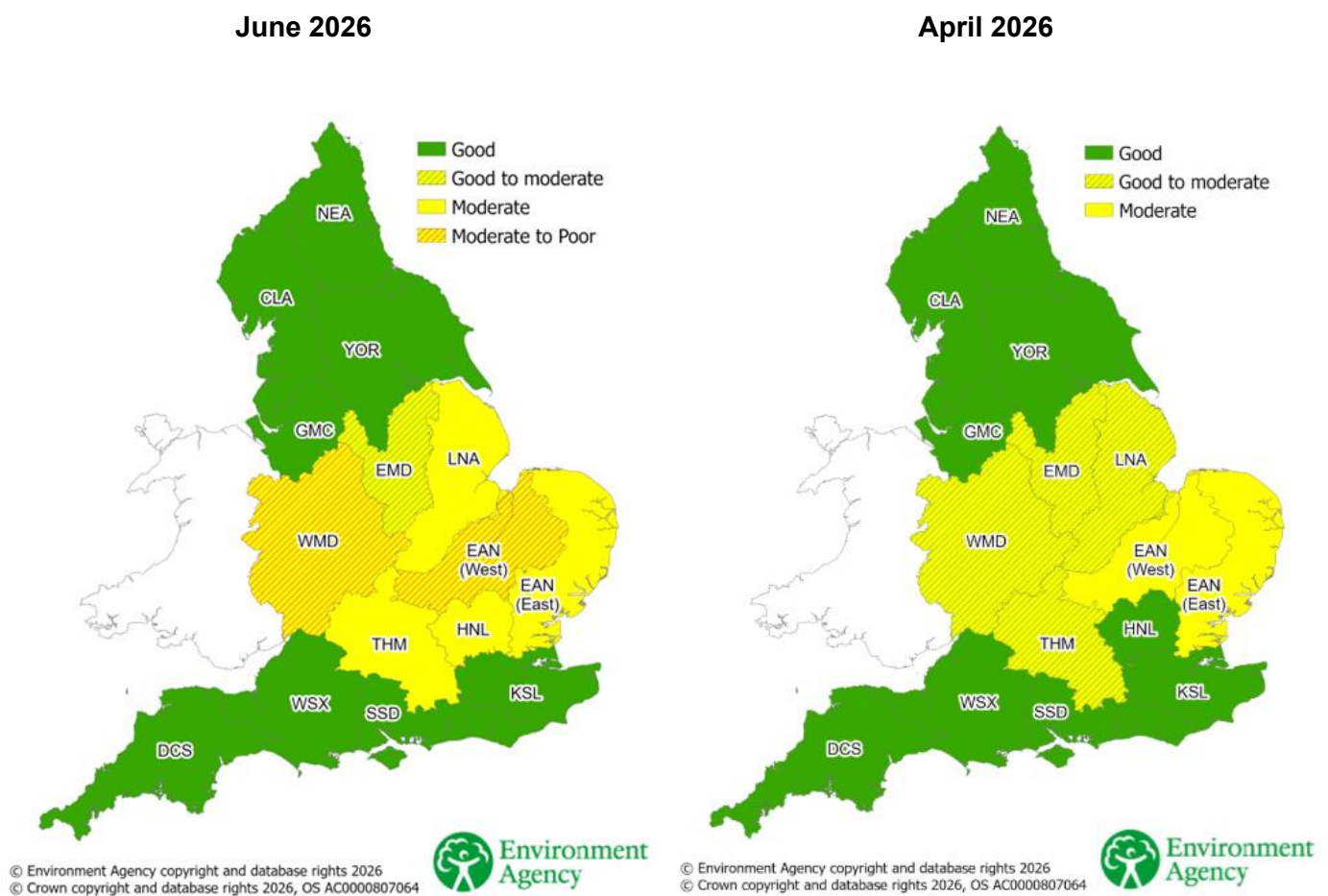


Figure 1- Updated area irrigation prospect forecast for June 2026 and comparison to April 2026

Irrigation prospects forecast for individual Environment Agency areas

Environment Agency Area	Prospects for Summer 2026 irrigation season
Cumbria and Lancashire	Good
Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly	Good
East Anglia East (covering Essex Norfolk and Suffolk)	Moderate
East Anglia West (covering Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire)	Moderate to Poor
East Midlands	Good to Moderate
Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire	Good
Hertfordshire and North London	Moderate
Kent, South London and East Sussex	Good
Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire	Moderate
North East	Good
Solent and South Downs	Good
Thames	Moderate
Wessex	Good
West Midlands	Moderate to Poor
Yorkshire	Good

Definitions

Prospects for spray irrigation are defined as 'Good', 'Moderate' or 'Poor'.

Good	Water levels are average or above average and supplies are expected to be safe. There is a possibility of minor local controls on abstraction from surface water in late summer if the weather is exceptionally hot and dry.
Moderate	Water levels are low. Some controls on surface water abstraction are possible by midsummer if the weather is hot and dry. Controls on abstraction from groundwater are possible in small, sensitive groundwater areas.

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Poor Water levels are well below average. Soil moisture deficit is developing early and significant restrictions on abstraction from surface and groundwater are probable.

Water Resources situation

Following a wet winter, this spring has been particularly dry with England receiving only 65% of the Long Term Average (LTA) rainfall between March and May. There were regional variations with rainfall this spring with north west England receiving 105% LTA rainfall, whilst eastern England received only 39% of LTA rainfall. It has been the third driest spring on record in eastern England. Temperature records were broken during heatwave conditions at the end of for May reaching 35.1°C, these values are more typical of mid-summer rather than late spring. June started with more unsettled conditions bringing some welcome rainfall to farmers and growers and up to the 13 June, England overall had received 88% of LTA rainfall.

Rainfall in June has helped increase river flows following the dry spring and on 9 June two thirds of rivers are classed as normal for the time of year. The Rivers Lune and Derwent in north-west England were classed as exceptionally high for the time of year. In contrast, the Ely Ouse in eastern England was classed as notably low, while the River Till in the north-east was classed as exceptionally low.

At the end of May, groundwater decreased at most monitoring sites as aquifers continued their seasonal recessions. The majority of monitoring sites were classed as normal for the time of year and one site in the limestone of the Cotswolds are notably low for the time of year due to the dry conditions this spring.

Soil moisture deficits continued to increase to the end of May throughout the country due to the combination of the below average rainfall and the warmest spring on record for England. At the end of May, soils were drier than average across England and are much drier than would be expected across east, central, south-east and south-west England, following three months of below average rainfall. The wet start to June has provided some temporary respite to increasing soil moisture deficits but with the return to dry weather forecast for rest of June we are likely to see these climb again.

More information on the current water situation is available at [Water situation reports for England - GOV.UK](#)

Long range weather forecast

For the remainder of June, some hot and humid weather is likely across parts of south and southeast UK with a chance of a few thunderstorms. The northwest will generally be more changeable at first, but there is a signal for high pressure to build more widely as we move towards the latter part of June. This could bring more widely drier, settled conditions with temperatures probably remaining above average for most. High pressure is expected to lie close to the UK into July, bringing plenty of dry, settled weather.

Temperatures will likely be above normal, with the potential for hot conditions, accompanied by occasional thunderstorms, especially in the south

More information on weather forecasts is available at the [Met Office](#)

Irrigation reservoirs

The dry spring has led to an early start to the irrigation season and a higher demand on farm irrigation reservoirs, especially where hands off flow restrictions have been implemented. These have impacted on some surface water abstractions, due to low river flows. Heavy usage of irrigation reservoirs during the spring means that current reservoir stocks are around 50-60% of capacity where irrigators have been

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relying on stored water. The dry spring has also seen some issues for spring sown cereals and other non-irrigated crops in eastern and south east England.

Mark Betson, the National Farmers Union Water Resources Specialist advised that

“Given the high demand for water the dry spring has generated in some areas, abstractors should take care to conserve stocks and consider how remaining water can be most profitably deployed if a further extended period of hot, dry weather occurs.”

Support for irrigators this summer

There is support available to abstractors and if you have questions or any concerns regarding your abstraction activities this summer, we strongly recommend that you contact the Environment Agency as soon as possible to discuss the options and actions. Support available to abstractors include:

- Short term options are available to improve your access to water outside of your licence conditions. Further information can be found in the Environment Agency guidance [water abstraction during prolonged dry weather and drought](#). The Environment Agency will talk to you about short-term options for improving your access to water outside the conditions of your licence.
- Consider trading water with other licence holders to improve access to water supplies. You can find out more about trading water rights on gov.uk or find abstractors with potential for trade on our [water rights trading map](#)
- [Sign up to managing your water abstraction or impoundment licence online](#). This will allow you to submit abstraction returns and view your licence information. All licence holders will also have access to water abstraction alerts by email 'e-alerts'.
- To help secure your future water supply, consider applying for a Local Resource Option (LRO) screening study with a group of farmers or growers in your area. A third round of applications is now open and closes on **5 July** and further information can be found on our [Engagement page](#).
- There is an Environment Agency [Regulatory Position Statement](#) available that covers information on when you can abstract water outside of the conditions of your abstraction licence during a flood warning. The statement applies to the abstraction of water during flooding at times of year that are not included within the licence conditions, or at instantaneous, hourly, or daily rates that exceed the licence quantities.
- Consider joining or setting up a water abstractor group to share information, increase knowledge of water regulation and best practices and improve communications with regulators. Find existing local groups at <https://www.ukia.org/wags/>

More detailed information on the dry weather support packages available to abstractors can be found in our [full irrigation prospect report](#) published at the end of April 2026.

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