

For the future of our environment

Water Scarcity Report

07th July 2023

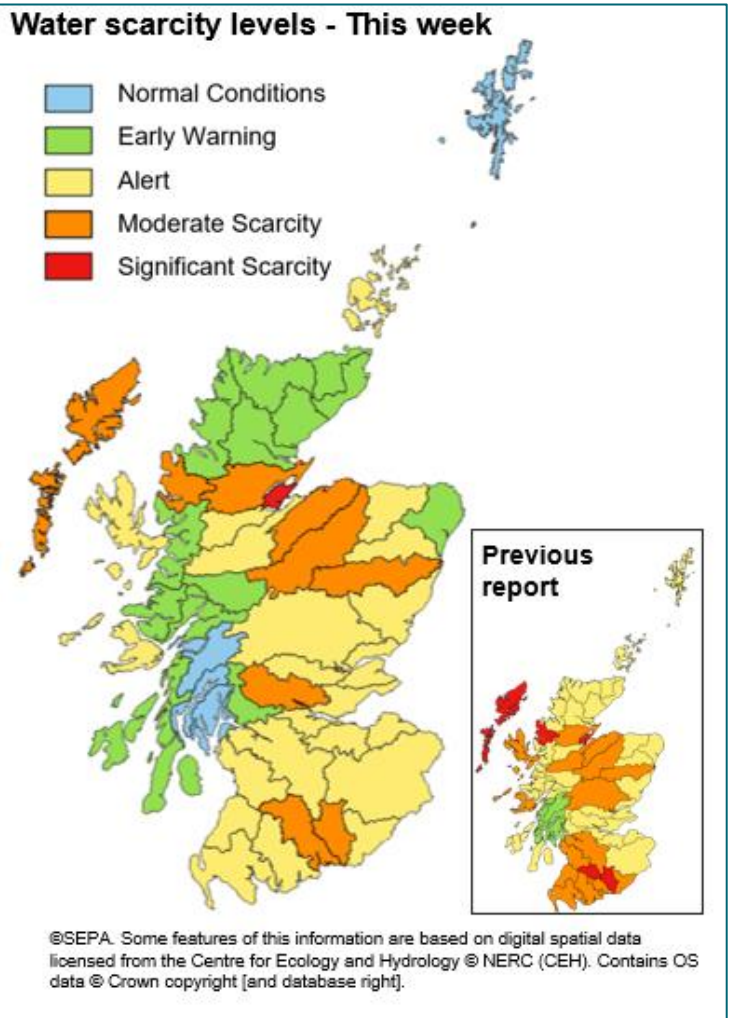
The Black Isle remains in a Significant Water Scarcity situation.

The Rivers Annan, Nith, the Outer Hebrides and the Loch Maree area have improved from Significant Water Scarcity to Moderate Scarcity.

The majority of Argyll and Bute has recovered to Normal Conditions.



Area of significant water scarcity in the Black Isle
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[Accessible version of national water scarcity map](#)



The overall risk of water scarcity takes account of the individual water scarcity indices, relevant water use, sectors in each region, and forecast weather conditions. The areas shown in this map represent major river catchments. Details on how levels are set and actions required can be found in SEPA's [National Water Scarcity Plan](#).

Situation Summary

Due to prolonged extremely low river flows, the Black Isle remains as the only area still at Significant Water Scarcity.

When an area reaches Significant Water Scarcity we consider additional action to protect the water environment. As such, some abstraction licences in areas of Significant Scarcity may be subject to a reduction in the allowable volume of water abstracted or may be suspended. These licence variations will be for the minimum time necessary and will be lifted as soon as possible.

The Forth area has been raised to Moderate Scarcity due to exceptionally low river flows in the east of the area. Recent heavy rainfall across parts of Scotland has led to the Rivers Annan, Nith, the Outer Hebrides and the Loch Maree area in Wester Ross decreasing from Significant Water Scarcity to Moderate Water Scarcity. The Nairn, Findhorn, Spey and Dee catchments remain at Moderate Water Scarcity as river flows in these areas remain extremely low. The Ness and Tay areas have decreased from Moderate Scarcity to Alert.

Further recovery of the Awe and Etive area of Argyll and Bute has resulted in conditions improving to Normal. Shetland has also improved to Normal Conditions. However, while there has been some recovery across parts of Scotland, many areas remain at risk of water scarcity, with prolonged, heavy rainfall required for large-scale recovery.

There has been continued improvement in soil moisture, particularly in western areas but many areas in the east are continuing to dry out.

Some showers are forecast for this weekend, with the heaviest, possibly thundery, across the north which may lead to some limited recovery in conditions. However, there is uncertainty

around the locations and amounts of this rain. If there is no recovery in river levels then further areas may be escalated to Significant Water Scarcity in the coming week.

If rivers remain at very low flows for more than 30 consecutive days there is a heightened risk of severe, long-lasting ecological impact. Details of this are outlined in [Annex 4 of Scotland's National Water Scarcity Plan](#) and the current count can be seen on [SEPA's Drought Risk Assessment Tool](#).

SEPA is monitoring the situation and coordinating steps to manage water resources in line with Scotland's National Water Scarcity Plan which is available on SEPA's website:

<https://www.sepa.org.uk/environment/water/water-scarcity/>.

You can help us by reporting any evidence you see of water scarcity. For details of information that would be useful to us and where to send it see: [Water scarcity in your area | Scottish Environment Protection Agency \(SEPA\)](#).

Advice for water users

Water sources used for irrigating farmland are at risk of becoming limited in the Alert areas. We are urging farmers in these areas, especially if taking water from burns and small rivers, to:

- Routinely check equipment isn't leaking;
- Only use the water required for the use;
- Consider water saving measures for next irrigation season.
- If the catchment reaches Moderate Water Scarcity, consider your upcoming water needs and begin to plan with others in the catchment to share the resource or schedule abstractions.

Managers of golf courses are asked to do the same.

For the most up to date advice please see: [Advice for abstractors](#).

Public water supplies are operating normally.

Weather forecast (06/07/2023)

Lighter rain through Friday, although some heavier outbreaks on south facing upslopes, particularly in the west. Turning dry through Friday afternoon. Heavy showers likely to spread north on Saturday. Further showers Sunday and Monday, likely to be heavier and more widespread on the Monday.

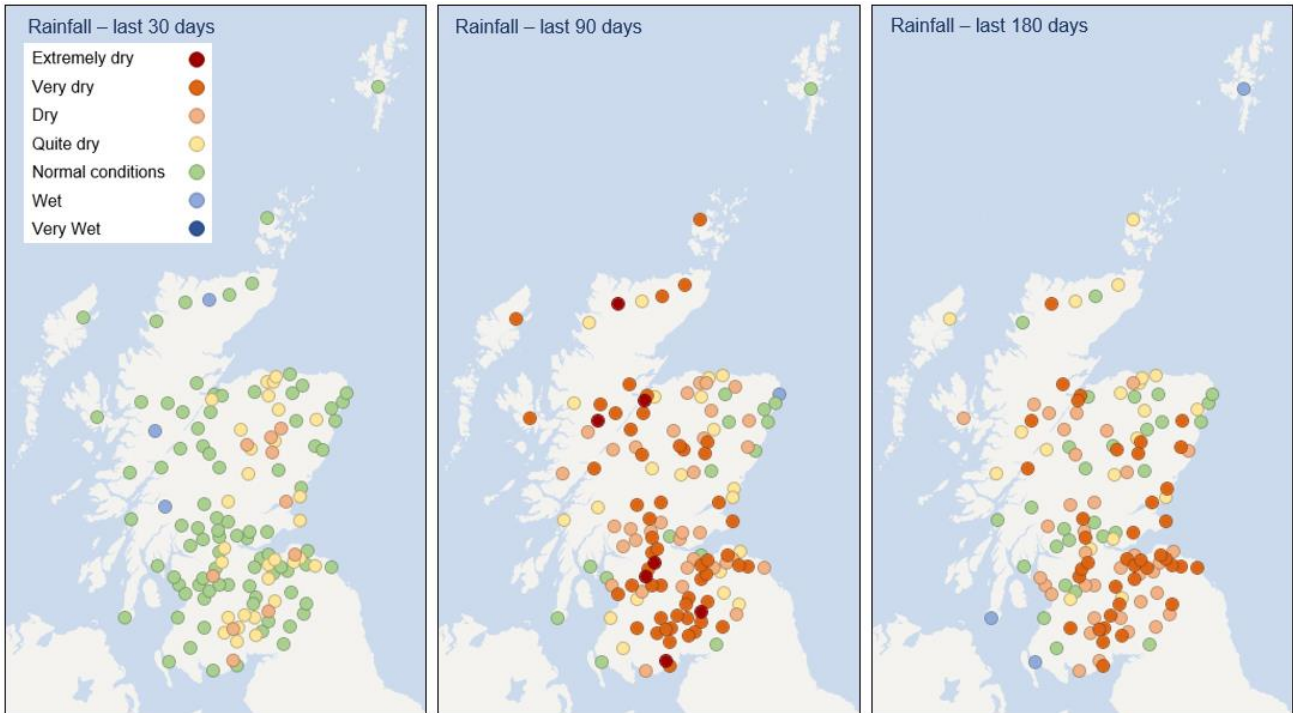
Unsettled weather is expected to continue into mid-July, with showers or longer spells of rain for many, most frequent towards the west. Towards the end of July and into August there are signs of a trend from generally less settled conditions towards generally more settled conditions. The outlook for the July – September period also suggests that across the UK there is double the usual chance of hot weather. The current long-term forecast indicates that this summer is likely to experience normal levels of rainfall.

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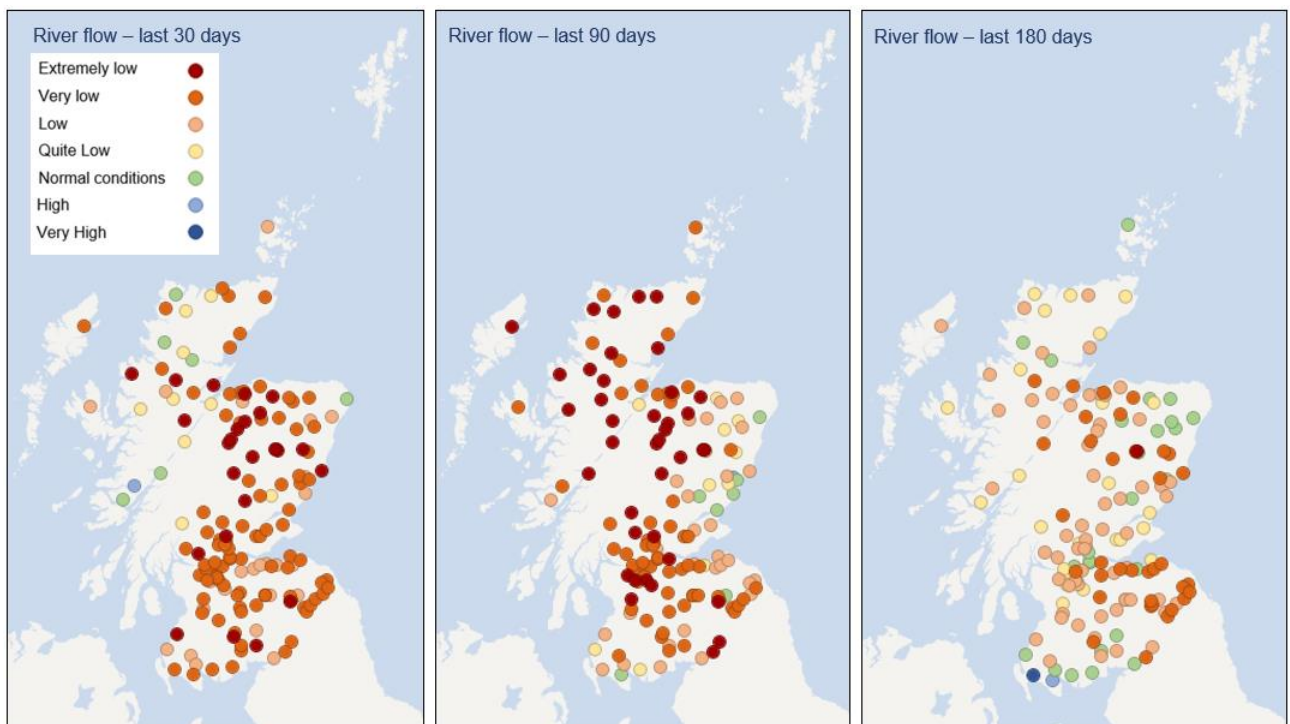
Supporting information

Rainfall and river flows:

These maps show rainfall (top row) and river flow (bottom row) relative to the long-term average, for this time of year, over 30 days, 90 days and 180 days.



Base map ©OpenStreetMap contributors



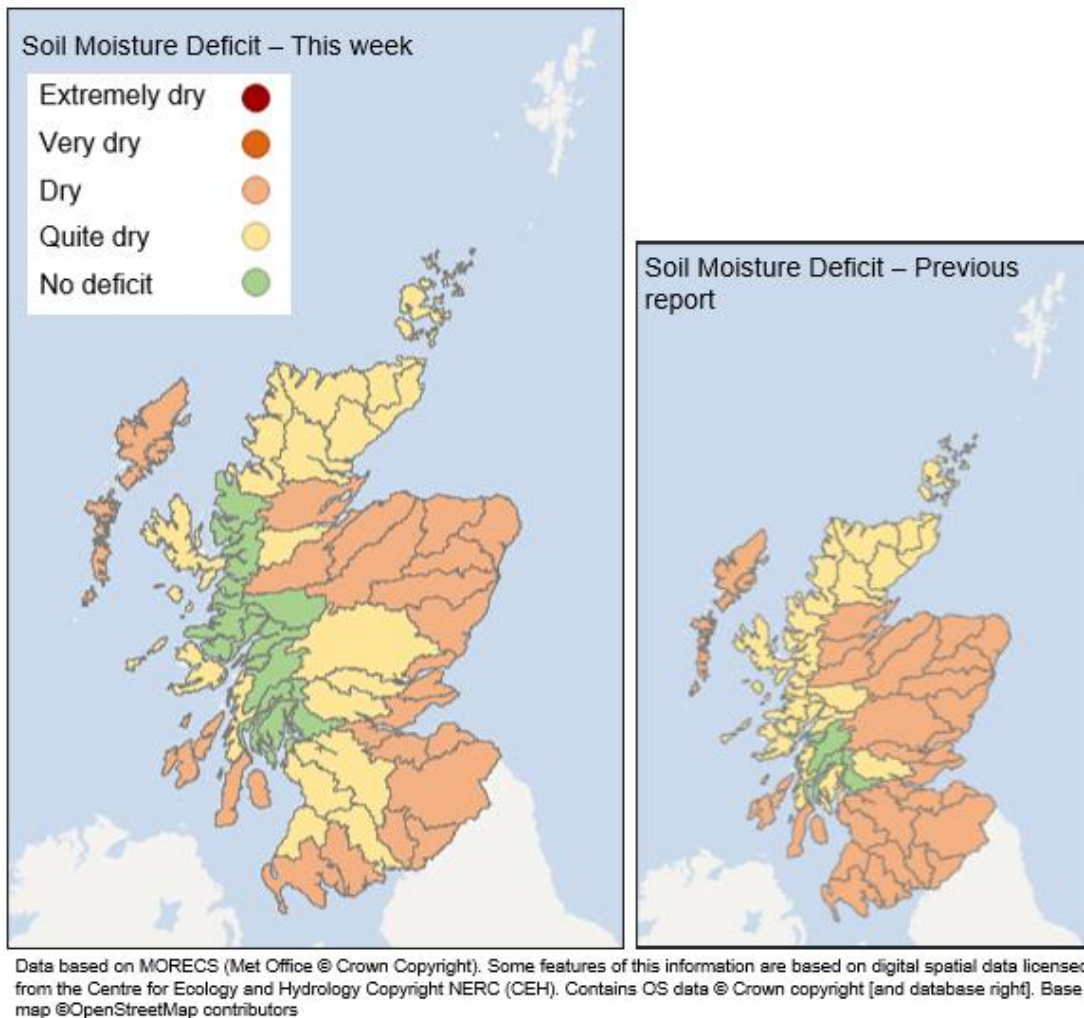
Base map ©OpenStreetMap contributors

Many parts of Scotland have experienced normal rainfall totals over the short term, however in some areas conditions remain dry to quite dry. Conditions in the medium term have been extremely dry compared to normal across much of northern and southern Scotland. Conditions in central Scotland have been largely very dry, while conditions in most parts of Aberdeenshire have been quite dry. In the longer term, following heavy rainfall events in March and April, rainfall totals have been more normal in the northeast and southwest of the country, with dry conditions more prevalent in the north and central area of Scotland.

In the short-term river flows across much of Scotland have continued to be very low or extremely low for this time of year, with some recovery to normal conditions in parts of the northwest. In the medium term, very low and extremely low flows have been seen in northern areas, with low flows in central Scotland and more normal flows evident in parts of the south and east.

Soil moisture deficit:

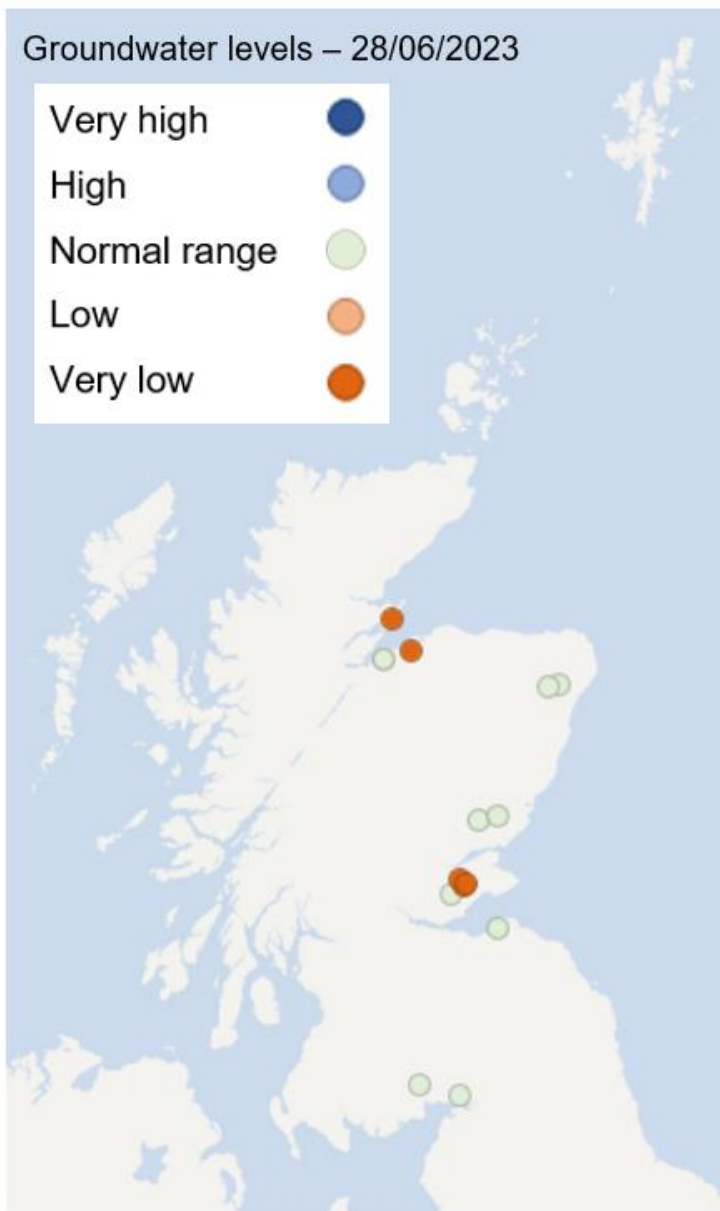
These maps show this week’s soil moisture deficit, alongside those previously reported for comparison. This is obtained from the Met Office Rainfall and Evaporation Calculation System (MORECS), no data is available for Shetland.



Widespread showers have continued to ease the drying of ground conditions particularly in the west, with Lochaber and Wester Ross now showing no soil moisture deficit alongside parts of Argyll and Bute. Some parts of Ayrshire and the Clyde region have also improved from Dry to Quite Dry, but the majority of the country is still either Quite Dry or Dry.

Groundwater levels:

This map shows groundwater levels compared to the long-term record at each station. Groundwater levels are updated fortnightly and reported as above (high) or below (low) the typical (normal) level for the calendar month. Groundwater level trend bands are specific to each station and based on the long-term (minimum 10 years) record of mean monthly level values recorded at individual stations.



In Fife, and near Forres some monitoring locations show that the seasonal low level has been reached earlier than usual.

Groundwater levels at SEPA’s other monitoring stations are within the normal range for this time of year.

Base map ©OpenStreetMap contributors



Natural water storage

In each river catchment there is some degree of natural water storage, which can maintain river flows even when it is not raining. This natural water storage is mainly held in lochs and groundwater. When storage has been depleted it will take a lot of rainfall for levels to recover.

Flow, rainfall and groundwater data are accessed via SEPA's [time series data service](#) (API). SEPA's live data are subject to ongoing quality control and periodic review.

For information on accessing this document in an alternative format or language please either contact SEPA by telephone on 03000 99 66 99 or by email to equalities@sepa.org.uk

If you are a user of British Sign Language (BSL) the Contact Scotland BSL service gives you access to an online interpreter enabling you to communicate with us using sign language.

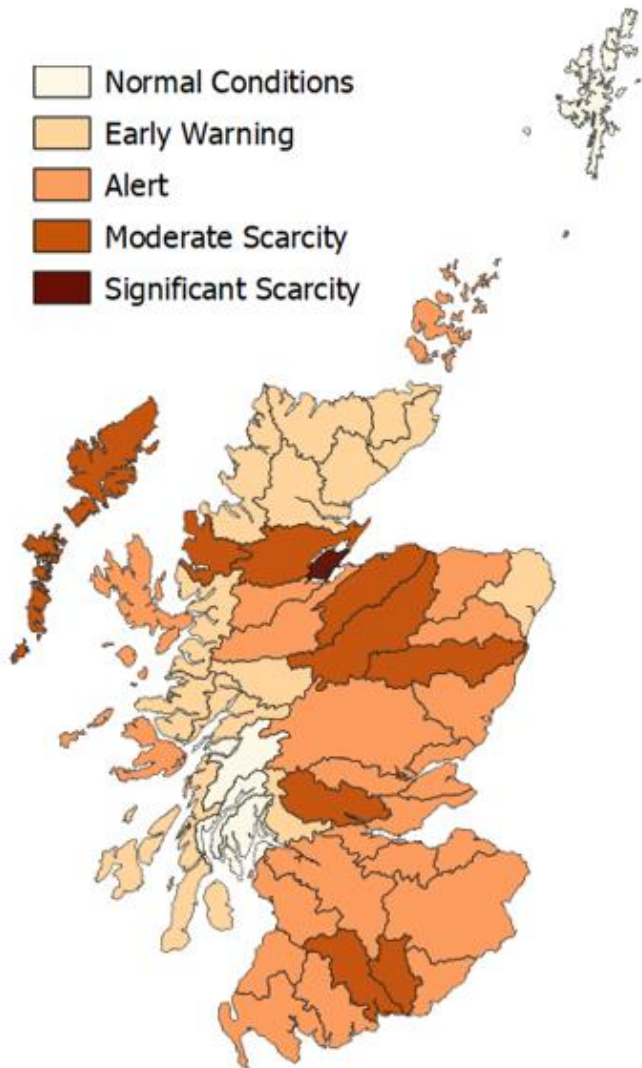
<http://contactscotland-bsl.org/>

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Appendix

Accessible national water scarcity map



[Link to Situation Summary](#)