

Water Scarcity Report

19th August 2021



HEADLINE

The Wick area remains at Significant Scarcity. Thurso and Orkney are also still at Moderate Scarcity.

The Isle of Lewis and Wigtownshire have recovered from Moderate Scarcity to Alert.

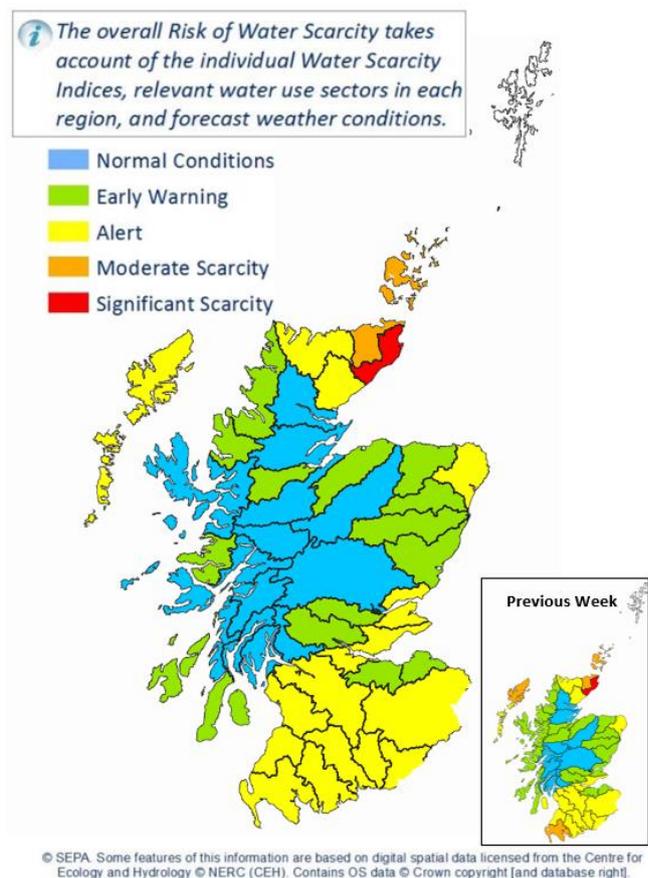
The Firth of Tay area has been raised to Alert.

The Outer Hebrides, most of southern Scotland, and some parts of the north and north-east all remain at Alert.

Arran has recovered to Early Warning, and other areas in the north have recovered from Early Warning to Normal Conditions.

Situation Summary

A Significant Scarcity remains in the Wick area, as river levels have now remained very low for over six weeks. Moderate Scarcities remain across Orkney and the Thurso area, where ground conditions have now been very dry since early July. Areas experiencing Moderate or Significant Scarcity have seen little rainfall. Significant prolonged rainfall in these areas will be required to improve the current situation. Based on the current forecast, this is unlikely in the near future.



In the last week, ground conditions have improved slightly in some northern and southern areas. In the north, this has led to recovery in the Ness catchment, the Argyll Coast and Loch Alsh areas, the Isle of Lewis and the Inner Hebrides.

In the south, recent improvement in conditions has been sustained, such that the Moderate Scarcity for Wigtownshire and the Alert for Arran have been downgraded to Alert and Early Warning respectively.

However, ground conditions around the Firth of Tay have become dry in the last week. This, along with sustained low river levels, has led to the area being raised to Alert.

The Outer Hebrides, most of southern Scotland, and some parts of the north and north-east all remain at Alert. In these areas, further dry spells could cause conditions to rapidly deteriorate.

Due to a problem with data availability in Shetland, the water scarcity level for Shetland is currently at No Data.

SEPA is monitoring the situation closely 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 and Moderate areas. We are urging farmers in these areas, especially if taking water from bums and small rivers, to:

- Only irrigate when, and only as much as, absolutely necessary.
- Make sure irrigation equipment isn't leaking.
- Try to irrigate at night to reduce evaporation losses.
- Explore how you and your neighbours in the same river catchment could avoid irrigating at the same time.
- Consider whether you could switch to using groundwater rather than river water if conditions worsen. If you would need a new borehole to do this, your local SEPA office will be able to help and advise.

Managers of golf courses are asked to do the same.

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

Water abstractors with concerns about meeting licence conditions or wishing to discuss contingency measures should get in touch at the following e-mail address

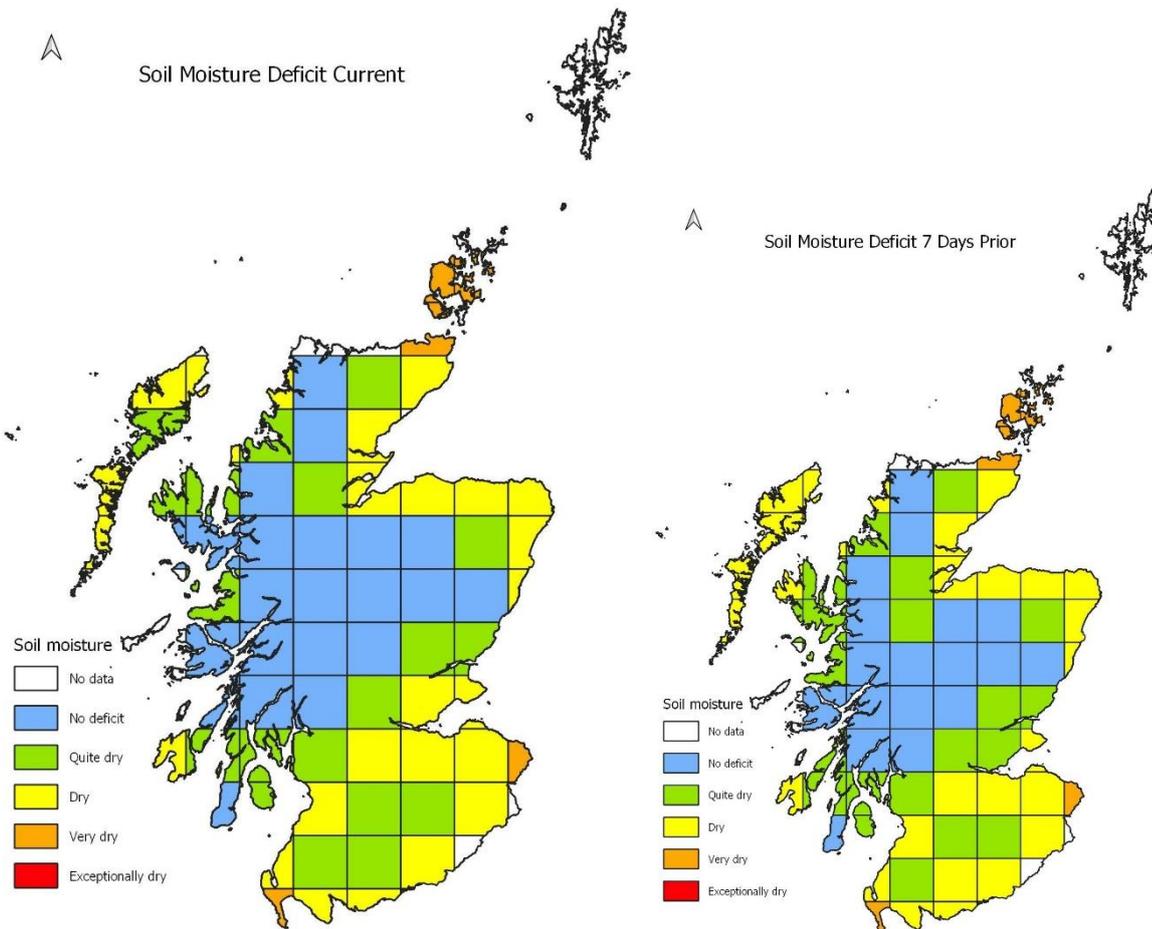
WaterScarcity@sepa.org.uk

Weather forecast (18/08/21)

Dry for much of Friday, then from the evening and through the weekend various rain bands crossing from the south, with highest risk of heavier outbreaks in the far south on Sunday.

At a seasonal timescale, models suggest the next three months are likely to see above normal temperatures and near average precipitation, although there is a slightly higher than normal chance of the season being dry.

Further details are available in the following figures:



These maps depict the current latest Soil Moisture Deficit (18th August 2021) and seven days prior for comparison. Based on the MORECS data obtained from the Met Office.



Natural water storage situation

In each river catchment there is some degree of 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 natural storage has been depleted it will take a lot of rainfall for levels to recover.

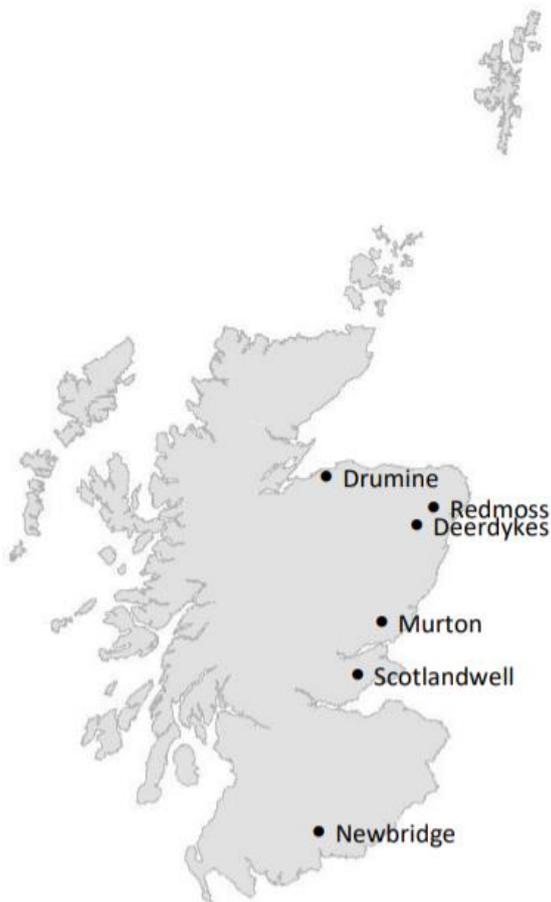
17th August 2021

Groundwater levels in the north-east are now low for the time of year and continuing to fall.

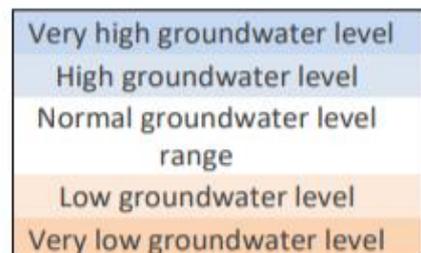
Groundwater levels in other areas are also falling but remain within the normal or high range for the time of year.

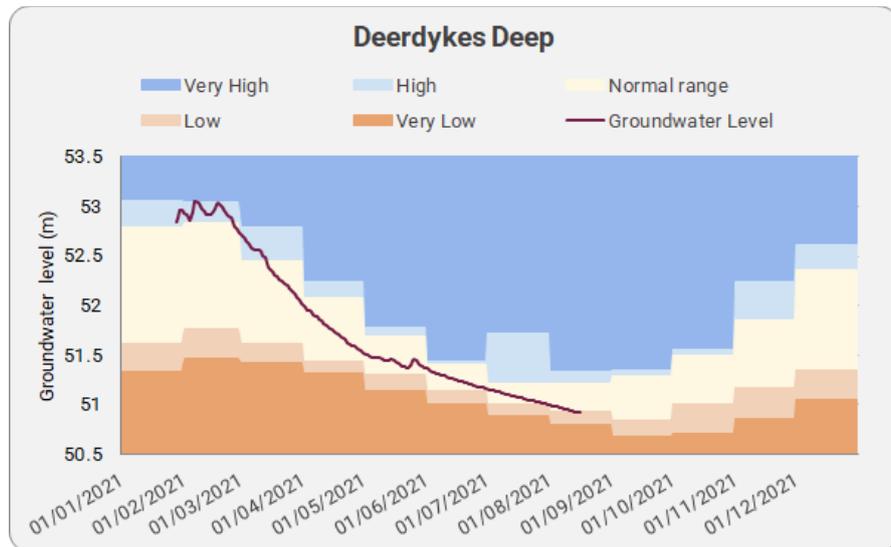
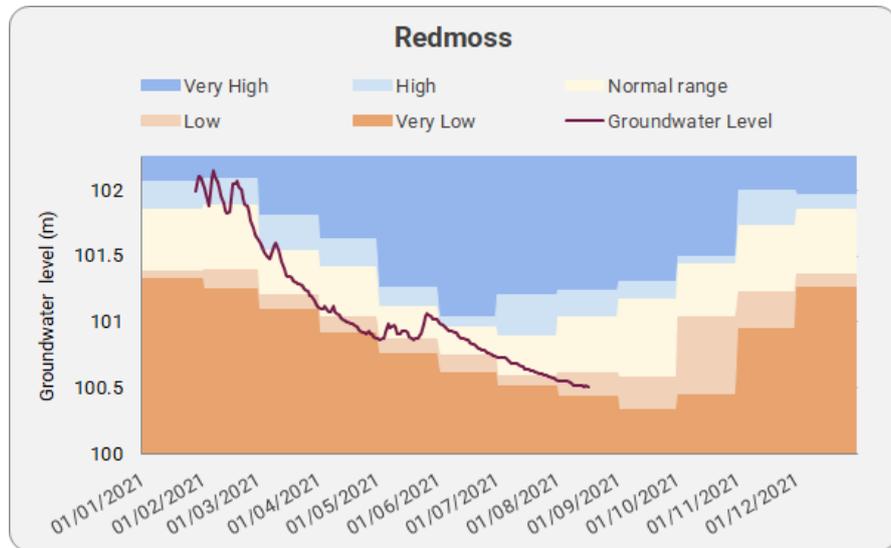
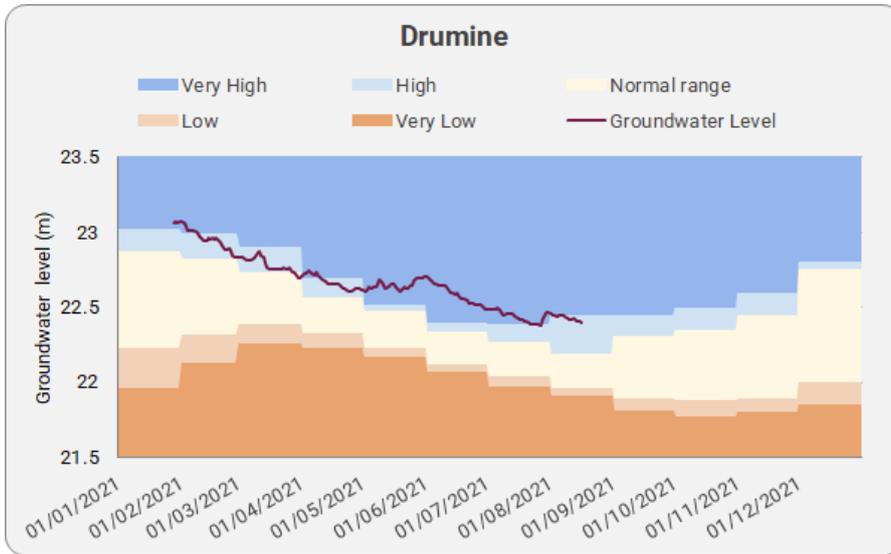
We have up to date data for 11 groundwater level monitoring sites, spread across the east and south-west of the country, giving a good picture of the current situation.

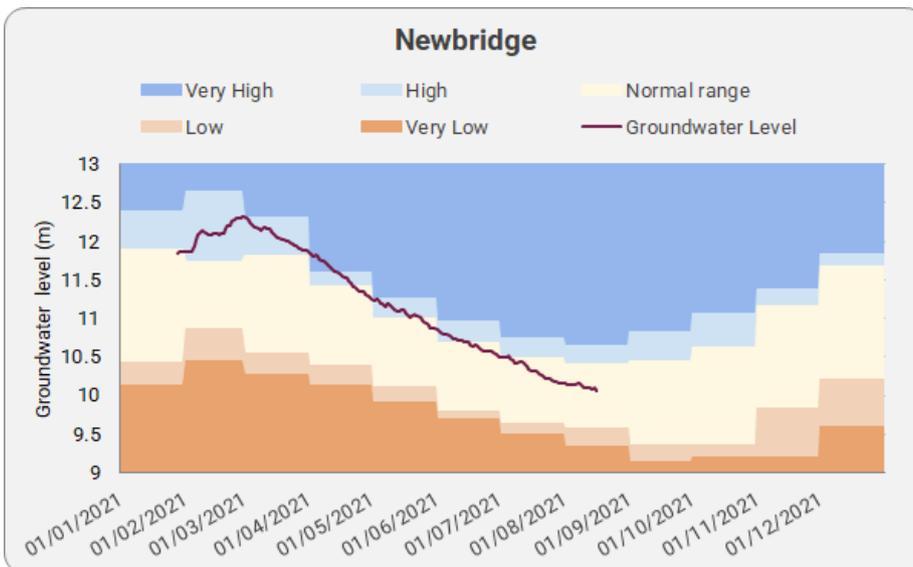
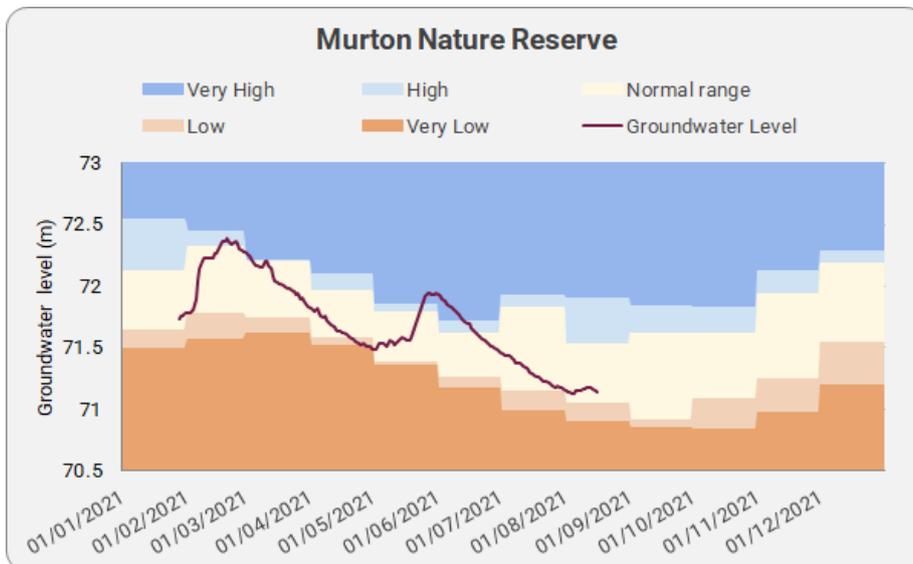
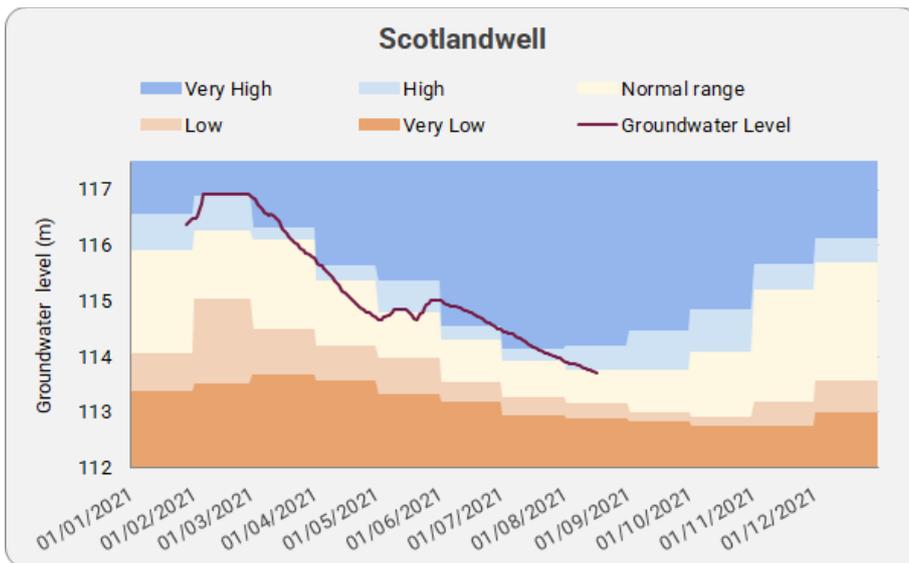
Loch level data is not currently available.



The following charts show the trend in groundwater level (GWL) since start of the year at selected monitoring sites (see map above). The black line shows the recorded groundwater level. This is plotted over level trend bands, which are based on the long-term record of mean monthly level values.







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/>

www.sepa.org.uk

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