

briefing note

New river and sea levels online service

What are we doing?

At the Environment Agency, we are responsible for ensuring there is sufficient water available for people, business and the environment; warning and defending people from flood risk; and protecting and improving our environment.

To help us do this we have thousands of monitoring stations across England and Wales that are used to measure the level of rivers, lakes, sea and groundwater. We also measure the flows of rivers and the amount of rainfall we get. This monitoring is called Hydrometry. Most of the measurements are taken electronically and automatically sent to databases used by our forecasting systems.

From the end of June, most of the water level measurements for rivers and the sea will be sent straight to our website and published online. The information will be updated daily, and in some cases, when water levels are high, the information will be updated more regularly. This new service, which is part of our ongoing package of flood warning information improvements has been designed following detailed testing with the public. We hope it will benefit both the public and our partners.

The online river and sea level information **will not replace flood warnings**, and we will continue to monitor water levels and provide advice and warnings.

Why are we making this information available?

We hope that you will find this information useful and will be able to use it to inform your decisions and actions when dealing with flooding from rivers and the sea. In some circumstances, it may also help you to identify where raised water levels could result in problems with surface water flooding.

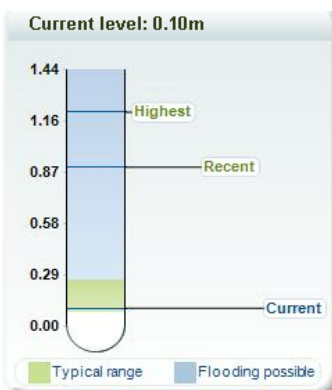
Having up to date information on local water levels will help people living in flood risk areas be better informed about the situation and decide what actions to take as the water levels change.

This information will also benefit people that use rivers for recreation such as anglers and boaters. They will be able to check the water levels before they set off.

What information is online?

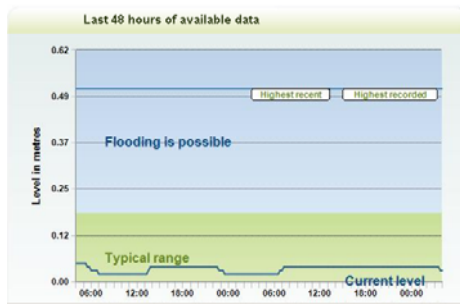
The website includes graphs which let you see at a glance what the water levels are.

River level 'thermometer'



- The river level 'thermometer' shows the current water level at a particular point.
- It also includes information to help you put this in context, such as the highest level recorded and the level where flooding is possible.
- There will be a written summary of the data underneath the graph.
- Most of the time, the published data will give an accurate water level. But occasionally the data might not reflect the true water level, for example because of conditions at the station or work to maintain or repair the monitoring equipment. We will make this clear on the website.

River hydrograph



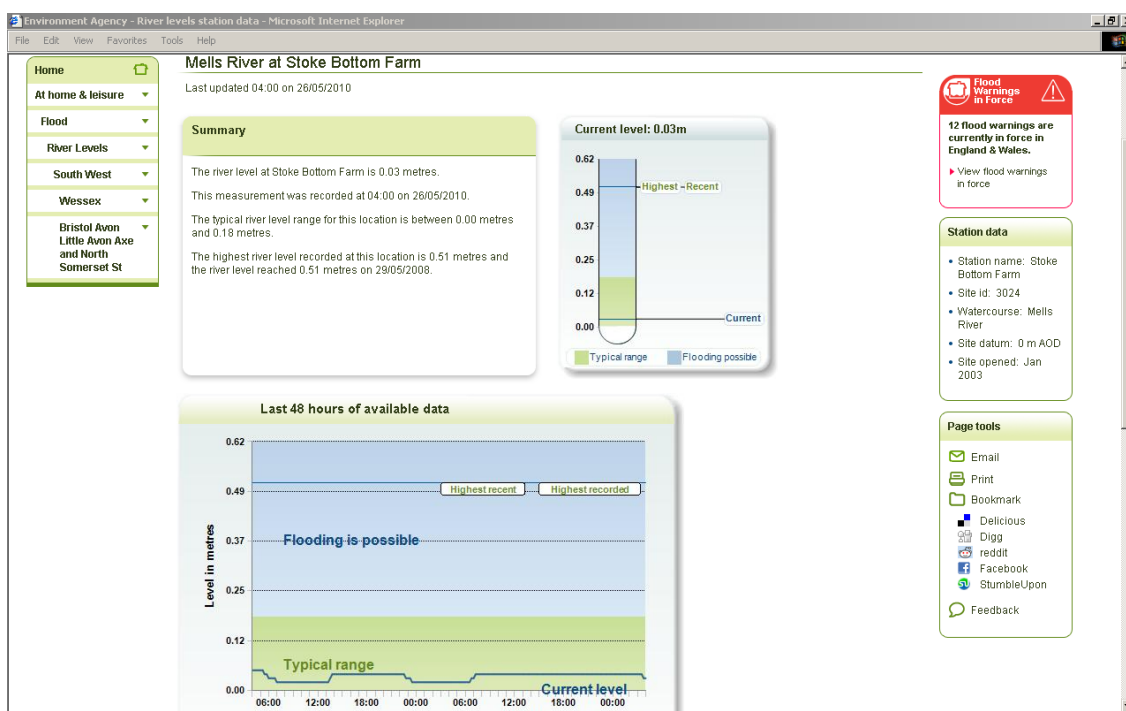
- The river hydrograph shows the recent water levels over the last 48 hours, along with information to help put these in context.
- You will also find information about the monitoring station where the measurements have been taken, including its name and the river it is on.

Contextual information

The contextual information will help you understand how the river level compares with previous levels.

- Typical range – shows where river levels are for about 90% of the time. This is calculated from historical level records, usually measured every 15 minutes. At some monitoring stations this range has been amended to take into account the affect of local flood defences or water restrictions. This range is different from the 'normal range' used within our water situation reports.
- Flooding is possible - is an indication of when river levels are high but does not replace our flood warning service or mean flood warnings will be issued. When one or more flood warnings in force, a link will appear directing people to our online live flood warning information.
- Highest recorded – The highest river level recorded at that station.
- Recent highest – The highest river level recorded at the gauging station in the past 5 years.

Example Screenshot



customer service line

08708 506 506

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

incident hotline

0800 80 70 60

floodline

0845 988 1188

How do I find out about river and sea levels in my area?

You can visit our website (www.environment-agency.gov.uk/riverlevels) and access river and sea levels free of charge.

The website includes maps which show where our monitoring stations are. The maps will have three scales – region, area and river catchment – so you will be able to focus in on your area. These maps are based on Environment Agency boundaries. Alternatively, you can navigate by county and catchment names.

How are we promoting the new service?

We will be promoting the service on our website and articles in relevant publications. We have also produced a leaflet for the public which explains the service. A PDF of the leaflet has been sent with this briefing note. You can get hardcopies of this on our [publications catalogue](#). The leaflet will be distributed by our Area teams at local events/meetings and will also be given to all our Flood Wardens.

Who can I contact for further information?

If you need any more information or want to provide any feedback or comments please contact your **Environment Agency Regional Implementation Manager** [\[insert contact details\]](#).

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