

January 2021

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1981-2010.

The first ten days of January were generally cold, with wintry showers in places in the first week and more general precipitation on the 7th and 8th. It turned milder and wetter in the south from the 10th, but colder air persisted at times in the north, resulting in some snow at the frontal boundary. Storm Christoph brought very wet and windy weather between the 19th and 21st, with many stations having over 100 mm of rain. It was colder from the 22nd to 25th with snow in places, mainly in the west and the Midlands. From the 26th it turned mild and wet in the south, but remained generally cold in Scotland.

The provisional UK mean temperature was 2.2 °C, which is 1.5 °C below the 1981-2010 long-term average, making it the coldest January since 2010. Both mean maximum and minimum temperatures were between 2.0 and 2.5 °C below average over much of Scotland, but less than 1.0 °C below in southern England and in Wales, and between 1.0 and 2.0 °C below in most other areas. Rainfall was 113% of average, and some parts of north-west and north-east England, the east Midlands and the south-east had over twice the normal amount, but it was drier than average over much of central and western Scotland. Sunshine was 95% of average, but with a marked contrast between below-average sunshine over most of England and Wales, and well-above-average sunshine in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The UK monthly extremes were as follows: A maximum temperature of 14.2 °C was recorded at Pershore College (Hereford & Worcester) on the 28th. Minimum temperatures of -13.0 °C were recorded at Dawyck Botanic Garden (Peeblesshire) on the 9th and at Braemar (Aberdeenshire) on the 31st. In the 24 hours ending at 0900 GMT on the 20th, 132.8 mm of rain fell at Honister Pass (Cumbria). Wind gusts of 60 knots (69 mph) were recorded at South Uist (Western Isles) on the 15th and at Marham (Norfolk) on the 21st. A snow depth of 32 cm was recorded at Trassey Slievenaman (County Down) on the 25th.

Weather impacts

Wintry conditions in the first week of January caused some travel disruption, mainly across Scotland, northern England and Northern Ireland, with some stranded vehicles and collisions. Ongoing snow and icy conditions through the second week of January continued to cause disruption. In Scotland, the A9 was closed in places, and other roads also closed with stranded vehicles. The high ground of northern England and Wales was affected by snow, with road closures and delays in the Pennines. Schools were closed in parts of Yorkshire and Derbyshire, while at lower levels flooding caused some transport disruption, affecting parts of the M6 and M60. Some COVID vaccination centres were closed due to snow in Newcastle and West Yorkshire on the 14th, with flooding to roads causing travel disruption; there were reports of cars stranded in flood water in Hertfordshire and flooded railway lines in Essex.

Storm Christoph swept across the country on 20th to 21st, causing significant flooding problems. Major incidents were declared in Greater Manchester and Cheshire due to flooding, with widespread flooding road and rail flooding and closures. Some properties were flooded, for example in Cheshire, with a number of water rescues carried out by the fire service. A landslide occurred above Pentre in the Rhondda valley, South Wales. There were also some flooded roads and trees down across the east of England and parts of the south-west. As Christoph cleared the

UK it brought heavy snow to parts of Scotland causing some road closures and difficult driving conditions.

The wintry weather continued to impact parts of the UK during the last week of January. Snow and ice on roads caused problems in Wales and Northern Ireland, and snow caused numerous road closures in the Midlands. Several COVID vaccination centres were closed due to poor travel conditions.

England diary of highlights

January began with a spell of generally cold weather with wintry showers at times in eastern areas. From the 10th a milder and more unsettled regime became established in the south but only slowly progressed into the north and east, where there was snow at times. It was often very wet in the third week, then turned colder between the 22nd and 25th with some snowfalls mainly in western areas and the Midlands, then it was mild and wet especially in the south during the closing days of the month.

The mean temperature for January was provisionally 1.2 °C below the 1981-2010 long-term average, which made it the coldest January since 2010. Rainfall was 150% of average, and it was a wet month except in Cumbria and parts of the south with some places having more than twice the normal amount. Sunshine was just 78% of average, making it the duller January since 2002, with a general shortage of sunshine except in the north-east, where sunshine was near or a little above average.

1st to 10th

A northerly flow dominated on the 1st and 2nd, with showers, wintry at times, persisting along eastern coastal areas on the 1st and some penetrating inland into parts of the Midlands, central southern and south-eastern counties. Wintry showers and longer spells of rain, sleet and snow moved southwards through many areas on the 2nd. From the 3rd to 5th an east to north-easterly flow brought frequent showers to eastern counties, some of these wintry especially on high ground, and more prolonged precipitation, mainly rain on low ground, affected the south-east on the 4th and 5th, spreading at times into central southern counties. This persisted into the 6th but mainly cleared by mid-afternoon, with scattered wintry showers in central and eastern parts producing snow to low levels in some counties. An area of rain, sleet and snow spread slowly south-eastwards through the country on the 7th and 8th, while otherwise there was widespread frost and fog and some sunshine, and Spadeadam (Cumbria) only reached -1.4 °C on the 8th. The 9th again saw frost and fog in places, otherwise some sunshine, with just a few wintry showers in the north-west. It turned milder in the north on the 10th with sporadic outbreaks of rain, but stayed cold with further frost and fog in the Midlands and south.

11th to 17th

It was generally milder and dull on the 11th with rain over the north-west becoming heavier and more widespread, spreading south and east. The rain moved steadily southwards on the 12th, becoming lighter and patchier but persisting over the south-west, with colder brighter weather following into the north. Central southern and south-western areas were cloudy with patchy light rain on the 13th and 14th, but elsewhere there was a slow-moving band of precipitation, which mostly fell as rain on the 13th, but turned widely to sleet and snow on the 14th before becoming confined to eastern coastal counties by dusk. The 15th was a quiet day with a widespread frost, especially over snow cover in the north with Ravensworth (North Yorkshire) falling to -11.8 °C, and Copley (Durham) reported 20 cm of lying snow. A band of rain spread from the west overnight into the 16th, turning to snow in many eastern areas, and again Ravensworth recorded a minimum

of -11.8 °C and Copley had 20 cm of snow. It turned milder from the west, and the 17th was mainly dry, but rain arrived in the north-west later.

18th to 25th

After a relatively quiet day on the 18th with showers or patchy light rain over northern and western counties, it turned very wet from the south-west on the 19th with a slow-moving band of rain, giving 123.8 mm at Honister Pass (Cumbria). It turned much milder, with Scilly St Mary's and Westonzoyland (Somerset) not falling below 10.3 °C overnight into the 20th. The 20th was another wet day, the rain turning to snow for a time in some northern and central counties before clearing away eastwards. Rain persisted over the far north on the 21st, with showers in western areas, wintry on higher ground, sunshine in some other areas, but rain skirted southern coastal counties in the afternoon. Winds increased too, with a gust to 69 mph at Marham (Norfolk). It was increasingly cold with sunshine and showers on the 22nd and 23rd, the showers becoming wintry at low levels, but some places, especially in the north-east, stayed dry. A band of sleet and snow, falling as rain near the south coast, spread eastwards from the Midlands southwards on the 24th, with wintry showers following behind over the south-west; the north stayed dry. The 25th was cold and generally sunny with 8.1 hours of sunshine at Shoeburyness (Essex).

26th to 31st

Milder, wet weather spread eastwards across the country on the 26th, with snow penetrating to relatively low levels in parts of the north. It was cloudy on the 27th and 28th, and a belt of rain spread from the south-west from midday on the 27th, clearing northern parts on the 28th, followed by further rain into the south-west late on the 28th; elsewhere there was some light drizzle. It turned very mild except in the far north, and Pershore College (Hereford & Worcester) reached 14.2 °C on the 28th. The 29th was a bright day for the east Midlands and East Anglia, cloudy with a little rain for many other places, but an area of rain crossed southern counties. Another area of rain reached the far south-west around dusk, which spread to cover most central and southern areas on the 30th, with some hill snow. Rain, with sleet on higher ground, affected the south-west on the 31st and spread to parts of the north-west, Midlands, East Anglia and the south-east, while the north-east stayed dry and chilly except for some coastal showers.

Wales diary of highlights

The first third of January was cold with wintry showers at times, but precipitation amounts were generally small. It turned mild and wet from the 11th to 20th, and it was particularly wet on the 19th and 20th as Storm Christoph passed over. It turned colder again between the 21st and 25th with snow for some, then mild wet weather returned from the 26th to 29th, but the month ended cold.

Mean temperatures for the month were 0.8 °C below the long-term average. Rainfall was 133% of average and sunshine was just 71% of average, making it the equal dullest January (along with 2002) since 1996.

1st to 9th

January began with the continuation of the late-December cold spell, and the 1st was generally cloudy with scattered wintry showers mainly across the north and east, Corgam (Dyfed) recording 10 cm of lying snow. After a widespread frost, further bands of wintry showers moved south across the country on the 2nd. The winds then veered north-east to easterly, so although the 3rd was generally cloudy with some light showers, showers were isolated on the 4th and 5th, while there were just isolated pockets of frost overnight due to the cloud cover. The 6th was sunny in western counties with 7.1 hours of bright sunshine at Aberdaron (Gwynedd), but cloudier

elsewhere with scattered wintry showers and snow penetrating to low levels. The 7th started off bright and frosty, but a band of rain, sleet and snow spread from the north in the afternoon, and this persisted for much of the day on the 8th, heaviest and most persistent in the north. After a widespread frost, the 9th was cold and sunny.

10th to 17th

This period was milder and generally wet. There was frost and fog in the south early on the 10th, the fog persisting in places, otherwise it was cloudy but dry. It turned milder and increasingly wet from the west on the 11th. The rain slowly cleared southwards on the 12th followed by brighter cooler weather, but more rain spread from the south-west from early evening. The rain area lingered over the north-east on the 13th and 14th, and another band of rain moved into western parts after sunset on the 13th, clearing on the 14th. The 15th was cold, dry and cloudy with some frost in places, patchy mist and fog clearing by around midday, then rain spread from the west overnight. The 16th and 17th were mainly cloudy with isolated showers.

18th to 25th

The 18th was generally cloudy with frequent showers or longer spells of rain for most places. Rain belts spread from the south-west on the 19th, with 111.0 mm at Capel Curig (Gwynedd), with rain continuing on the 20th. It was mild overnight into the 20th with Rhyl (Clwyd) not falling below 9.9 °C. A showery westerly brought sunshine and showers on the 21st and 22nd, and the showers turned more widespread, heavy, prolonged and locally thundery on the afternoon of the 22nd. Showers were more wintry on the 23rd following a widespread frost, and a belt of rain, sleet and snow spread north-eastwards through the country early on the 24th, followed by sunshine and showers, the showers falling as snow in most places. The 25th was sunny with just isolated wintry showers, following a minimum of -10.8 °C at St Harmon (Powys).

26th to 31st

The weather turned mild and wet on the 26th, with widespread rain clearing slowly east, though there was some sleet and snow mainly on high ground before it turned milder. Both the 27th and 28th were cloudy, after foggy starts in many places, with rain belts moving in from the south-west. Despite the cloud cover it was very mild especially on the 28th with a high of 13.8 °C at Usk (Monmouthshire). It was cloudy and windy with outbreaks of mainly light rain throughout the 29th, and Mumbles (West Glamorgan) recording gusts to 59 mph. It turned colder on the last two days, and widespread rain, sleet and hill snow on the 30th eventually cleared from the south around midday but persisted over the north before dying out in the early part of the evening. The 31st started with a widespread frost, and remained generally chilly with an area of rain quickly spreading east to all parts during the morning, readily turning to sleet and snow in places, persisting throughout the day but turning lighter and patchier from late afternoon; Lake Vyrnwy (Powys) only reached a maximum of -0.7°C.

Scotland diary of highlights

It was a generally cold month, marked by persistent rather than exceptional low temperatures, though with some milder, wetter interludes, particularly on the 10th and 11th, from the 16th to 20th, and in southern areas from the 26th to 29th.

The mean temperature for the month was 2.1 °C below the long-term average, and it was easily the coldest January since 2010. Rainfall was 80% of average overall, and was above normal near the east coast, with more than twice the normal amount in the far south-east, but below normal in most central and western areas. Sunshine was 136% of average, and it was particularly sunny relative to normal in the Western Isles and north-west Highlands, making it Scotland's 4th sunniest January in a series from 1919.

1st to 9th

Northerly winds brought bright frosty weather for many central, western and southern parts on the 1st and 2nd, with showers, some of these wintry, in the north and east. From the 3rd to 5th, the winds were east to north-easterly, bringing showers, wintry at times, to eastern counties which sometimes penetrated into central areas, but it stayed mainly dry with overnight frosts in western counties. Some areas were very cold on the 5th with a maximum of only -3.8°C at Resallach (Sutherland). Wintry showers briefly affected the far south-east on the 6th, otherwise it was a mainly frosty sunny day at least to begin with, but rain and drizzle spread south-east from the Western Isles and turned increasingly to sleet and snow as it moved over the mainland. This slowly cleared the east and south on the 7th, with early fog over the Borders, and wintry showers or longer spells of wintry precipitation across the north and west. The 8th was a mainly sunny frosty day with a few scattered wintry showers in the far north. There was a severe frost in places early on the 9th with a minimum of -13.0°C at Dawyck Botanic Gardens (Peebles-shire), followed by a cloudier day with rain and hill snow, as milder air spread across the northern half of the country.

10th to 15th

It was temporarily milder on the 10th and 11th, with light rain and drizzle generally and a persistent and slow-moving area of rain across the north, Achfary (Sutherland) recording 59.7 mm on the 10th. The rain moved slowly and erratically south on the 11th, and it turned colder from the north with snow on higher ground. It was mild overnight into the 11th with an overnight minimum of 7.5°C at Islay Port Ellen (Argyll) and Leuchars (Fife), and Drummond Castle (Perthshire) reached 10.9°C during the day. The 12th was generally cold and bright after a widespread frost, with wintry showers in the north and east. A belt of rain, over western and south-western parts early on the 13th, spread slowly eastwards, turning increasingly to freezing rain, sleet and snow, though the north-east and Northern Isles remained largely dry. This band of rain, sleet and snow continued to move slowly east on the 14th, becoming confined to the east coast by dark, with wintry showers developing in the far west. The 15th started off frosty with patchy mist and fog, followed by sunshine across the north and east, but it clouded over from the west with rain reaching the west coast by evening, and turned rather windy with gusts to 69 mph at South Uist (Western Isles).

16th to 25th

Rain moved eastwards overnight into the 16th, turning increasingly to sleet and snow as it spread across the mainland, and cleared the east coast mid-morning, followed by milder weather with showers and longer spells of rain spreading to all but the north-east. Another belt of rain spread south and east into central and south-western counties on the 17th, with scattered showers for the west and north and some sunny interludes elsewhere. The 18th had showers, heaviest and most frequent over the north, with some sunshine in the east. The 19th was bright with some showers over the north but rain spread from the south-west during the day, reaching the Central Belt, and this persisted over the south on the 20th, turning to snow in places and spreading into eastern parts. The 21st was a very wet day in the north-east; rain, sleet or snow cleared other places followed by brighter weather with showers. The period 22nd to 24th had sunshine – Dunbar (East Lothian) recorded 7.2 hours of bright sunshine on the 23rd – and increasingly wintry showers, these mainly over the north and west. The 25th saw scattered wintry showers in coastal areas but otherwise it was mainly sunny.

26th to 31st

Mild and wet weather spread into the south at times, but failed to reach northern areas. Rain, turning to snow along its leading edge, spread to all but the far north and north-east on the 26th, and the south-west turned milder. The rain eased on the 27th, but there was still light rain and

drizzle for most, while it was brighter with the odd wintry shower in the far north and the Northern Isles. Further rain, with snow on the northern flank, affected most of the country on the 28th, spreading northwards to all parts before retreating southwards on the 29th, and Loch Glascarnoch (Ross & Cromarty) recorded 19 cm of lying snow on the 29th. The 30th and 31st were generally brighter with isolated wintry showers near the east coast, and Braemar (Aberdeenshire) fell to -13.0 °C overnight into the 31st. An area of rain affected the far south-west at times on the 31st.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

The first nine days of January were mostly cold and bright with scattered showers, these wintry at times. It turned mild and wet from the 10th, and very wet for a time on the 19th/20th with the passage of Storm Christoph. It turned colder again from the 21st to 25th with sunshine and wintry showers, then the last few days were cloudy, wet and milder.

The mean temperature for January was 1.4 °C below the 1981-2010 average, making it the coldest January since 2010. Rainfall was 102% of average and sunshine was 129% of average, and sunshine was below average in the far north, but well above average in the south-east.

1st to 9th

A northerly flow brought sunshine and scattered wintry showers on both the 1st and 2nd. The wind veered east to north-easterly between the 3rd and 5th, resulting in a frosty start and a mainly sunny day on the 3rd, and sunshine and just isolated showers on the 4th and 5th. Isolated wintry showers clipped eastern coasts on the 6th, otherwise it was again frosty then mostly sunny. A band of rain, sleet and snow moved southwards overnight into the 7th, followed by sunshine and scattered wintry showers. The 8th had scattered wintry showers over the west, otherwise it was another cold sunny day with a maximum of only 0.5 °C at Trassey Slievenaman (County Down) and 6.4 hours of sunshine at Aldergrove (County Antrim) and Katesbridge (County Down). The 9th started with a widespread frost and a minimum of -10.5 °C at Katesbridge, followed by a cloudier day with isolated wintry showers.

10th to 17th

The weather turned mild and wet from the west. It was generally dull on the 10th, mist and fog persisting for much of the day, with occasional outbreaks of rain or drizzle. Patchy rain early on the 11th became widespread and locally heavy by mid-afternoon. It was dry, cloudy and mild on the 12th, but rain arrived from the south-west before evening, and persisted on and off throughout the day on the 13th. It was mild overnight into the 14th with Killowen (County Down) not falling below 7.2 °C, then after a misty drizzly start it brightened up with sunshine and scattered showers in the afternoon. After a frosty start with patchy fog, the 15th was cloudy, becoming wet and windy from the west from mid-afternoon, with gusts to 59 mph at Magilligan (County Londonderry). It was brighter with scattered showers on the 16th, and cloudier on the 17th with showers becoming more widespread during the afternoon.

18th to 25th

After a cloudy day with scattered showers on the 18th, it was dull and very wet on the 19th. The rain cleared from the west overnight into the 20th, but lingered in the south-east, otherwise it was a cloudy day with scattered showers. From the 21st to 25th the weather was brighter with scattered showers, and the showers turned wintry from the 22nd onwards, falling widely as snow between the 23rd and 25th, with frost developing widely overnight, and mist and fog patches in some places early on the 23rd. Trassey Slievenaman reported 32 cm of lying snow on the 25th.

26th to 31st

Rain, sleet and snow on the 26th cleared eastwards by mid-afternoon, followed by drier, milder weather, but still mostly cloudy. Many places had a foggy or misty start on the 27th, and rain spread from the south-west from late afternoon, giving 32.8 mm at Killowen. The 28th was dull with patchy rain, but generally the mildest day of the month with a high of 11.8 °C at Magilligan, then further rain spread to all parts from mid-afternoon. It was cloudy with patchy light rain on the 29th, and rain persisted over the south on the 30th, clearing away around dusk. Rain soon spread to most of the country on the 31st, turning to sleet or snow over higher ground, with only the far east staying mainly dry.

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