



May 2025



UK Faces Driest Spring in Nearly 70 Years

The United Kingdom has just experienced its driest spring since 1956, with March and April 2025 recording significantly below-average rainfall. March was the driest in England since 1961, and April received only half its usual rainfall. This prolonged dry spell has led to early drought conditions, and significant challenges for agriculture and water management.

Farmers across the UK are reporting early crop failures and are resorting to irrigation much earlier than usual. The National Farmers' Union warns of further crop losses and potential risks to livestock if May does not bring substantial rainfall.

Water companies are warning of potential hosepipe bans due to persistently low rainfall and decreasing reservoir levels. Companies such as Northumbrian Water are considering Temporary Use Bans (TUBs), while Welsh Water reports slightly lower water levels but no immediate concerns. National water storage is currently at 84%, a decline from 90% in April 2022, particularly affecting northern regions.

While weather variability has always existed, climate change is amplifying these extremes. Warmer temperatures lead to faster evaporation of moisture from soil and vegetation, reducing water availability even when rainfall does occur. The frequency and severity of dry spells and droughts are projected to increase in the UK as global temperatures continue to rise. This spring's conditions are a stark reminder that climate impacts are not confined to distant regions or future decades—they are happening now and here.



Concrete Consequences: How the Urban Heat Island Effect is Heating Up Our Communities

As Britain braces for hotter, drier summers, there's a growing awareness of a phenomenon quietly intensifying the heat in our towns and cities: the urban heat island effect. Walk down a tree-lined lane in the countryside and then onto a sun-soaked high street, and you'll feel it instantly — the concrete, asphalt and buildings

of our urban environment act like a giant storage heater, trapping warmth and releasing it long after the sun has set.

Temperatures in urban centres can be as much as 5°C higher than surrounding rural areas, particularly during heatwaves. For vulnerable residents — the elderly, young children, those with existing health conditions — this heat can be more than uncomfortable; it can be life-threatening. NHS data shows that heat-related illness is rising year on year, with many hospital admissions concentrated in the densest parts of our towns.

This is not just a matter of discomfort. The heat island effect increases energy demand for cooling, puts strain on infrastructure, and worsens air pollution — compounding health risks. Pavements and roads crack under pressure, while wildlife, already under stress from habitat loss, struggles to adapt to the scorching microclimates we've created.

So, what can be done?

The solutions are, in many cases, refreshingly green. Urban trees, green roofs, and shaded parks all play a vital role in cooling the air, breaking up heat-retaining surfaces and providing natural relief. Reflective roofing materials and lighter-coloured surfaces can also reduce heat absorption. Councils, developers and homeowners all have a part to play. Planning policies can require shade provision and green infrastructure in new developments. Residents can plant trees, install water butts, and swap paving for permeable surfaces and greenery.

In a warming world, adapting our towns to stay cool is not just good planning — it's essential public health policy. We built the heat islands; now we must rewild and retrofit our way out of them.



UK Solar Power Shines Brighter: Record Growth in Spring 2025

The United Kingdom has experienced a remarkable surge in solar energy generation this spring, marking a significant milestone in the nation's renewable energy journey.

According to data from Ember, the UK's solar power output accounted for 4% of all utility-supplied electricity during the first quarter of 2025. This marks a substantial increase compared to the same period in 2024 and sets the stage for solar to contribute over 10% of total electricity during the upcoming summer months.

This growth is underpinned by a steady increase in installed solar capacity. The UK added approximately 1.2 GW of new solar capacity in 2024, bringing the total installed capacity to 17.6 GW by the end of the year. Projections for 2025 are even more optimistic, with forecasts suggesting an addition of 3 to 3.5 GW of solar capacity, representing a 50% year-on-year increase from 2024.

The expansion of solar energy is not only a win for the environment but also for energy security and economic growth. Increased solar generation reduces reliance

on fossil fuels, lowers greenhouse gas emissions, and creates jobs in the renewable energy sector.

However, this rapid growth also presents challenges. The National Energy System Operator (Neso) has warned that the influx of solar energy could lead to unprecedented operational challenges, including potential overgeneration during periods of low demand . To address this, investments in grid infrastructure and energy storage solutions are essential to ensure stability and reliability.

As the UK continues to embrace solar power, the focus must remain on sustainable growth, balancing the benefits of clean energy with the practicalities of grid management and infrastructure development.

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