

2023 Month by Month Impacts

<u>January</u>	<u>Weather impacts</u>	<u>In the news</u>
	The first half of January continued with the mild, unsettled and wet theme of the last two weeks of December, with some areas having roughly their average rainfall for the whole of January within the first two weeks. Again, though, this proved to be a month of two halves, with much drier and colder weather from mid-month, although temperatures gradually edged upwards in the final week to somewhere near or slightly above average. This was also a particularly sunny January, for the second year in a row.	At Westminster, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak attempted to restore a sense of stability after a dramatic 2022 which saw his predecessors Boris Johnson and Liz Truss ejected from office by their own MPs. But he was soon hit by a sleaze row when his party chairman Nadhim Zahawi was forced to resign for failing to declare that HMRC was investigating his tax affairs on becoming Mr Johnson's chancellor last year. Strikes by nurses, ambulance workers and train drivers rumbled on from the beginning of the year – with teachers voting for industrial action later in January.
<u>February</u>	<u>Weather impacts</u>	<u>In the news</u>
	February overall was milder and drier than average, with high pressure influencing the weather for much of the time. It was unsettled initially, and again for a time from mid-month, but the month was remarkable for its dryness, this being provisionally the UK's driest February since 1993. It was also a mild month, especially further north, despite colder spells from 5th to 9th and from 23rd onwards.	In February, Nicola Sturgeon stunned Scotland by suddenly announcing she would resign as first minister. She told reporters at the time she was stepping down for personal reasons, but later she and husband Peter Murrell were arrested in connection with an investigation into SNP finances, leading to dramatic scenes with police tents outside their suburban Glasgow home. In England, Mr Sunak hailed his Windsor Framework deal to reduce checks on goods moving between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK. 24 February marked the anniversary of Russia's war in Ukraine. Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky visited the UK earlier in February and the country's support for the war-torn nation remained constant throughout the year. Plans to deal with the NHS backlog were thrown into further disarray when junior doctors announced they would join other health workers on picket lines, with NHS consultants joining them later in the year.
<u>March</u>	<u>Weather impacts</u>	<u>In the news</u>
	March began cold and dry, under the influence of high pressure, but from the 8th onwards it was predominantly unsettled with moist, milder air pushing up from the south. For the second week the cold air was at times reluctant to move away from northern areas, with snow for some areas most especially around the 7th-10th on the northern boundary of the milder air, but from mid-month it was broadly mild everywhere. After transitory fine weather on the 27th, the month ended with a westerly pattern, very unsettled with low pressure close to the UK, maintaining a dull and wet theme.	The Government was in more difficulty when, on the first day of March, the Daily Telegraph published former health secretary Matt Hancock's pandemic-era WhatsApp messages. The newspaper led with the claim Mr Hancock had ignored the advice of Chief Medical Officer Sir Chris Whitty to test all residents going into English care homes for the virus in April 2020. Later that month, Chancellor Jeremy Hunt delivered his budget amidst a gloomy economic backdrop.

		Industrial action was a theme running through the whole of 2023, driven by disputes around pay and working conditions amid the rising cost of living. With 553,000 working days lost to strike action, March was the most impacted month. Walkouts in the education and health and social care sectors contributed to three-quarters of total days lost for the year, while the transport industry (including train and tube drivers) caused 11.5% of the days lost.
<u>April</u>	<u>Weather impacts</u>	<u>In the news</u>
	April was a predominantly unsettled month, with little in the way of consistent warmth, though it was more settled for a time around mid-month, when it became warmer especially over Scotland. This was followed by a return to rather chilly and unsettled conditions until just before month-end.	In April, Dominic Raab resigned as deputy prime minister and justice secretary after an inquiry found he bullied civil servants. Food price inflation finally started to fall in April, after two years in which prices had risen by almost a third.
<u>May</u>	<u>Weather impacts</u>	<u>In the news</u>
	The very start of May was quite settled and fine, but the weather soon turned much more unsettled from the south-west, with widespread falls of rain between the 4th and the 11th. Heavy thunderstorms and locally torrential rain caused flooding in many southern and eastern areas of England on the 9th. Towards mid-month things settled down, with high pressure building, and from the 12th onwards any falls of rain were mostly localised and light. This period was also a rather sunny period for many areas, in contrast to much of the rest of this spring, with the fine and settled weather lasting for the rest of the month, though at times a lot of cloud covered eastern coastal areas.	King Charles and Queen Camilla were crowned in May, in front of the year's biggest TV audience of 18.8 million viewers. Charles had become King in September 2022, while Liz Truss was still prime minister, but the coronation followed eight months later. That meant Rishi Sunak had been in charge for fewer than 200 days when he faced his biggest electoral test as leader, also in May - elections in 230 local councils across England. It didn't go well. The Conservatives lost over 1,000 councillors and more than 48 councils, allowing Labour to become the largest party of local government for the first time since 2002.
<u>June</u>	<u>Weather impacts</u>	<u>In the news</u>
	June began fine and settled, with temperatures around average, but from the 9th it became warm and humid, and rather less settled, with thunderstorms breaking out in many areas. It remained very warm or hot for most of the rest of the month, but cooled down again in the final few days. It also became rather unsettled generally towards the end of the month.	In June, Mr Johnson resigned from his Uxbridge and South Ruislip seat after MPs on the privileges committee found he had misled parliament over lockdown-breaking parties in Downing Street.
<u>July</u>	<u>Weather impacts</u>	<u>In the news</u>
	July was an unsettled month - often cool, dull, windy and with a lot of rainfall, in stark contrast to June. The jet stream was generally shifted much further south than in June, with the weather often rather autumnal in character. Any hints of drier and warmer weather proved short-lived. Through the month, a succession of frontal systems made regular west-to-east progress across the UK. Although there was a brief very warm spell around the 7 th -9th, the hottest places just touching 30°C, this soon broke down with thunderstorms.	The Conservatives lost two by-elections heavily but clung on in Mr Johnson's old seat by campaigning hard against the expansion of London's ultra-low emission zone. The by-election came just as Britons were scrambling to return from the Greek island of Rhodes, which had been ravaged by wildfires. A live-action feature of Mattel's Barbie doll and a biopic of the "father" of the atomic bomb formed a surprisingly popular double billing over the summer, when their coinciding release captured the imagination of the internet. Both attracted huge audiences, resulting in the most successful weekend at the UK box office since before the pandemic.

<u>August</u>	<u>Weather impacts</u> August was a rather mixed and unsettled month, continuing the theme of July, although to a slightly lesser extent. Low pressure systems mostly dominated the weather, with any brief spells of high pressure bringing settled weather generally short-lived in nature. Summer warmth was mostly confined to southern and eastern areas, with only one really hot day on 10th when temperatures reached the mid to high 20s quite widely. There were some notably cool spells; on 5th August maximum temperatures struggled to reach even 15°C across many eastern areas. Any periods of dry weather were also fairly brief. Two named storms, Antoni on 5th and Betty on 18th to 19th brought unseasonably wet and windy weather to many parts of the UK.	<u>In the news</u> In August, the Government announced the first migrants would be boarding the Bibby Stockholm barge harboured in Portland, Dorset, but they had to be evacuated within days after legionella bacteria was found on the vessel. In sport, the Lionesses had a spectacular run of wins in the Women's World Cup in Australia, but were unlucky in the final when they lost 1-0 to Spain. England goalkeeper Mary Earps saved a penalty in the final and would go on to be named Sports Personality of the Year, and completely sell out releases of her Lionesses replica shirt - twice.
<u>September</u>	<u>Weather impacts</u> High pressure influenced the UK's weather for the first half of September, bringing fine, sunny, dry conditions and the most significant spell of warmth since June. From 4th to 10th, the UK experienced a significant heatwave with temperatures exceeding 30°C somewhere in the UK for seven consecutive days: a September record. Temperatures in England reached 32°C on 6th, 7th, 9th and 10th, and 33.5°C at Faversham (Kent) on 10th, making this the hottest day of the year. However, the heat brought several outbreaks of thunderstorms and intense downpours with rainfall rates of 20 to 30mm per hour, with impacts from flash-flooding. The second half of the month saw an abrupt change to much more unsettled and autumnal weather with westerly weather bringing Atlantic low pressure systems and significant rain. There were some very wet and windy days, notably storm Agnes from 27th to 28th, although fortunately the storm was weakening by the time it reached the UK.	<u>In the news</u> Parents' plans for the return to school in September were thrown into chaos when a dangerous form of concrete was found in scores of classrooms just days before pupils were set to go back. Royals marked a year since the death of the late Queen on September 8 at services across the UK, while Charles released a short message and an unreleased photograph of her from 1968.
<u>October</u>	<u>Weather impacts</u> The first half of October mostly comprised a north-south contrast in weather across the UK. England and Wales were generally nearer the influence of high pressure over the near continent, with a particularly warm and sunny spell of weather from 6th to 10th. Temperatures reached the low 20s °C widely across England and Wales with 25°C in the south-east on 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th, more than 8°C above average for the time of year. This was the most significant spell of October warmth since 2011. Fronts sweeping across the UK from 12th to 13th brought widespread wet and cooler weather to the UK more generally, and a final end to any lingering late summer warmth. The second half of the month was unsettled and very wet at times. Widespread, prolonged and heavy rainfall from storm Babet from 18th to 21st caused brought serious flooding problems to many areas, with eastern Scotland worst affected. This, together with	<u>In the news</u> October saw Mr Sunak and Sir Keir Starmer both outline their pitch to the electorate in what could be their last party conference speeches before an election. The Prime Minister announced the northern leg of HS2 would be scrapped alongside plans to ban smoking and reform A-levels in a bid to pitch himself as a change candidate. On 7 October, Gaza-based militant group Hamas launched an unprecedented attack on Israel, killing around 1,200 people, including 675 civilians. Israel responded with a bombing campaign and ground invasion, which Gaza's health ministry says killed more than 20,000 people. The UN estimates that more than 7,000 children were among the dead. The scale of the bombardment, as well as an accompanying 135% increase in attacks by Israeli settlers, prompted protests around the world, including in the UK, as well as a rise in hate incidents against

	some very strong winds, brought atrocious weather conditions with 150 to 200mm of rain falling in the wettest areas. The Met Office issued two red warnings for rain in this area, and the county of Angus recorded its wettest day on record in a series from 1891. More widely, England and Wales also provisionally recorded its third-wettest 3-day period on record.	Jews and Muslims. Hundreds of thousands of Britons took to the streets to join pro-Palestinian protests. Former home secretary Suella Braverman became increasingly vocal in her opposition to the demonstrations which she branded “hate marches”, while the Government unsuccessfully pushed for one march through London on Armistice Day to be banned.
<u>November</u>	<u>Weather impacts</u>	<u>In the news</u>
	The first half of November was unsettled and stormy at times with the ongoing influence of Atlantic low pressure systems and strong winds and heavy rain of most note. Storm Ciaran on 1st to 2nd was an exceptionally severe storm for the Channel Islands and northern France but fortunately a 'near miss' for southern England. Further south, winds were comparable to the 'Great Storm' of 16 October 1987. Storm Debi also brought some very strong winds on 13th, particularly affecting Northern Ireland, North Wales and north-west England. These storms contributed to mounting rainfall accumulations through a very wet autumn in some areas. 30 to 50mm of rain fell across southern England from storm Ciaran and a further 30 to 50mm across Northern Ireland and parts of north-west England from storm Debi - with over 100mm across upland areas. There were some incursions of colder air at times with -7.1°C recorded at Altnaharra, Sutherland on 16th, and frosts as far south as Kent with -0.8°C at East Malling, Kent on 12th, though nothing extreme for the time of year. In contrast, the second half of November saw rather quieter autumnal weather with a continued mild Atlantic influence until the last week. However, from 24th, a northerly airflow introduced drier but much colder weather, with some hard frosts (for example -4.8°C at Hurn, Dorset on 8th), and some wintry precipitation, particularly in the north and east.	By November, Mrs Braverman’s increasingly frequent and vocal comments on the marches had become too much for Mr Sunak who sacked her from the Cabinet. James Cleverly moved from the Foreign Office into her old role, while former prime minister David Cameron made a dramatic return to politics as Foreign Secretary with a seat in the House of Lords. But any sense of a reset proved short-lived for Mr Sunak as Supreme Court judges ruled Government plans to send small boat migrants to Rwanda unlawful just days later and net migration reached a record high. The COP28 climate conference started in November in Dubai. By the end of the conference, countries signed an agreement to "transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems". Oil companies also pledged to lower methane emissions.
<u>December</u>	<u>Weather impacts</u>	<u>In the news</u>
	The cold snap in late November extended though the first week of December, with some very hard frosts (-4.7°C at Culdrose, Cornwall on 2nd and -12.5°C at Altnaharra, Sutherland on 3rd). Snow caused significant disruption across northern England on 3rd, with parts of the Lake District badly affected (for example the Ambleside area). The cold weather was swept away on 9th to 10th by storms Elin and Fergus which brought very wet, windy and disruptive weather - but much milder Atlantic air, including some exceptionally mild nights. Thereafter the weather continued very mild through most of the month, except across the far north, dull and wet at times with persistent rain from a succession of Atlantic fronts and mounting rainfall accumulations. The UK recorded its highest daily	By December, the Prime Minister was facing an increasingly ungovernable party as different factions branded his new plans to get Rwanda flights off the ground as too tough and not tough enough and was dominated by voting on the government's Rwanda policy, which passed, meaning Rishi Sunak narrowly avoided a damaging Commons defeat.

	minimum temperature on record on Christmas Day with 12.4°C at Exeter Airport and East Malling, Kent. The month ended with a spell of very unsettled, turbulent weather. Storm Gerrit on 27th to 29th brought further strong winds and heavy rain, with significant disruptive snow falls across Highland Scotland and winds gusting at over 70Kt (81mph) at a number of stations. The year closed out with yet another Atlantic low pressure system bringing further very wet and windy weather. Overall, Scotland bore the brunt of the worst of the weather over the course of the month.	
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Sources: The Met Office/Sky News/BBC News/The Independent