

# How Storm Chandra left Dorset underwater – and there's more to come

As locals continue to deal with the effects of successive storms this year, many brace for further flooding as rain is set to hit already saturated ground in the South West



Flooding at Iford Bridge Home Park in Bournemouth, Dorset (Photo: Andrew Matthews/PA Wire)



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Flood warnings have been issued across the country, with towns and villages already underwater in the South West facing the terrifying prospect of further

rainfall.

Villages like Charminster and Christchurch [flooded during Storm Chandra](#), but many areas are still being affected by continued flooding since the storm ended more than 10 days ago.

The Environment Agency has issued 76 flood warnings for areas where flooding is “expected” and more than 240 flood alerts, which is a lower level of risk.

The flood warnings are most prevalent across Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire and Hampshire. In Dorset, groundwater levels are thought to be at or near a record high.

The [prolonged flooding and threat of rain](#) has caused significant disruption in Dorset, where sports fixtures have had to be cancelled and businesses temporarily closed.

Liberal Democrat MP Edward Morello said “vast swathes” of his constituency in West Dorset are still underwater since Storm Chandra, which ended more than 10 days ago.

Now, with heavy rain set to hit the region again  for the next few days, he called on Emma Hardy, an environment minister, to explain how she would address flood-prone areas.

Some parts of his constituency in Dorset have been badly affected by flooding already, and like other areas of the South West, are now bracing for even more rainfall, which is likely to exacerbate the issue.

“Whole villages have become islands,” Morello said in the Commons on Thursday. “84 houses in Yetminster have sewage in them.



Further rain is to hit parts of south-west England, where communities are recovering from flooding in the aftermath of Storm Chandra (Photo: Finnbarr Webster/Getty)

“One family in Maiden Newton had only just moved back into their house following 15 months of repairs after the previous flooding, only to get flooded again within three days.”

Melissa Foot, owner of Cut Loose Unisex Hair Studio in Blandford, shared her salon’s extensive flooding on social media last week.

She posted photos and videos of the salon submerged in water, apologising the customers for cancelling appointments and adding “it would seem I won’t be open any time soon”.

Meanwhile, a Dorset League Two football match at Day’s Park in Swanage was postponed yesterday due to a waterlogged pitch.

More than a month’s rainfall was recorded in the first three weeks of January alone, and since the new year the South West has been hit particularly hard by Storms Goretti, Ingrid and Chandra.

In parts of South West England, it has now rained for more than 37 days continuously.

Somerset was also severely affected by Storm Chandra (Photo: Zoe Head-Thomas/PA Wire)

Following Storm Chandra, further heavy rain is set to bring more disruption and flooding to already saturated ground in Dorset.

Met Office operational meteorologist Dan Stroud said: “Unfortunately, there’s no end in sight.”

Earlier this week, Dorset Council warned residents that as many as 14,000 homes were at risk of flooding.

In a social media update, Dorset Council said: “We continue to see groundwater flooding across Dorset.

“Groundwater behaves differently from river flooding – it can linger for weeks or even months as water drains slowly into the chalk and limestone beneath us, causing the water table to rise.”

It urged residents to sign up to flood alerts, and emphasised the severity how “persistent” this type of flooding can be. “With more rain forecast we expect levels to rise further.”

Tracey Garrett, chief executive of charity The National Flood Forum, confirmed

the extent of flooding is particularly sever at the moment.

She told *The i Paper*: “We’re seeing it most particularly in the South West. Dorset is one of the places where we’re seeing historic highs of groundwater at the moment.”

“The problem with groundwater is that it takes so long to dissipate, it stays in the ground for a very long time,” she explained.

Sewage discharges have been reported across multiple areas due to the high levels of rain (Sewage Map)

Hundreds of stretches of river across the region with current or recent discharges due to the recent storms, and Ms Garrett said this can be one of the most devastating aspects of flooding.

She said: “With groundwater flooding there comes sewage flooding as well. You can imagine a river of sewage flowing through your home, which can devastate families.

“It’s really impactful, as it can ruin your home and treasured, meaningful belongings... It’s very very difficult for people because your home is your castle and you should feel safe in it.”

This comes as the Met Office predicted “heavy showers”, especially in the South West, across the next couple of days.

Its forecast noted “showers and spells of rain are still very much part of the

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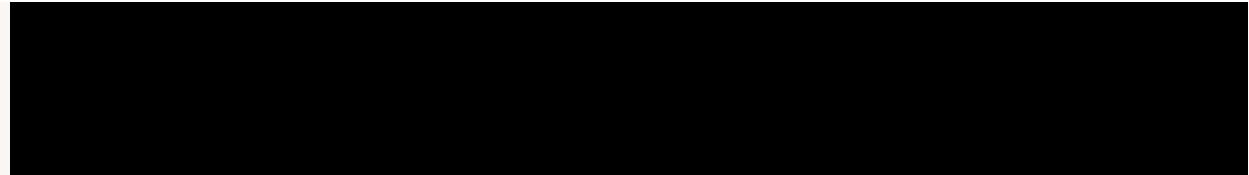
picture" this weekend, with south west England one of the key areas where moisture is being drawn.

"Although rainfall totals this weekend are not expected to be excessive, any further wet weather could cause localised issues due to the cumulative effect of previous downpours," the Met Office further warned.

Most of the flood warnings, including for the Tarrant Valley in Dorset and the Ebble Valley in Wiltshire, refer to the likelihood of groundwater flooding.

Neighbouring county Somerset has already declared a major incident due to flooding on the moors, with a multi-agency response ready to react to further rainfall.

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Environment Agency information for areas at risk of groundwater flooding and urged locals to consider alternative power sources in case of power cuts, and further warned of the risk of “inundation of septic tanks and sewer system”.

Locals now fear the potential effects of further rainfall, with long stretches of the Avon and other rivers under flood warning due to high water levels.

The National Flood Forum has a helpline people can call if they are concerned about flooding, as well as information on their website.