



Are UK rainfall patterns changing?

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In 2012, a major 2-year drought across England & Wales was terminated by one of the wettest multi-month periods in records from 1766,; the transformation from drought to floods occurring extraordinarily through the summer half-year. The six successive wet summers from 2007 to 2012 were the wettest such sequence across England & Wales since the 1880s. During the Cumbria floods of November 2009, a new 24-hour rainfall record was set for the UK.

Such examples of recent hydrological extremes have led to many questioning whether UK rainfall patterns are changing. Here we set these events into context using the UK's long historical rainfall records, discuss differences between recently calculated 1981-2010 long-term-averages against those for earlier periods, and investigate whether UK extreme rainfall shows any evidence of changes over time.