

Thornhackett Parish Council Environment Champion (EC) Report July 2025.

Given the talk preceding the July meeting a quick summary on drought may be appropriate.

Dorset and the wider south-west England region are currently experiencing significant drought conditions. This follows a period of exceptionally dry weather, with river levels across the Wessex area (which includes Dorset) at or near record lows. The Environment Agency has confirmed that these low flows are placing substantial strain on local wildlife and the environment, with some river catchments reporting the lowest flows on record.

Rainfall data from the Met Office gauge at Yeovilton, which serves as a representative station for the region, shows a marked deficit compared to long-term averages. Recent 5-day periods (late June and early July 2025): Only 4.3 mm and 5.5 mm was recorded at Yeovilton and this is more than fell in Thornford. In March, Nationally, only 25% of the usual rainfall was recorded in England, with the Wessex region (covering Yeovilton and Dorset) receiving just 13% of its long-term average. This pattern reflects a persistent rainfall deficit since the start of the year, particularly in January and March.

The situation remains critical, and continued monitoring and water conservation measures are recommended by local bodies.

Climate change is I believe clearly already affecting our locality and is projected to cause significant shifts in local weather patterns over the coming decades. The main anticipated changes include **warmer temperatures, altered rainfall patterns, increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, and rising sea levels.** These changes all appear to be accelerating at present and will have direct and indirect impacts on Local residents, businesses, infrastructure, natural environment, and economy.

The climate of Dorset may resemble that of present-day Portugal, if emissions are not reduced, with more arid conditions in summer, and more periods of intense rainfall in winter with a projected increase of 10 to 40%, according to Natural England

With all of these pressures on our environment, nature and livelihoods, food supply, transport and energy networks and water supply amongst others, I recommend that the Parish boldly considers the impact on the health of its community and looks for ways to improve contact and information flow on what people can do, and also try to help to improve easy access to the countryside, for health and wellbeing. This could be simply seeking a step free or stile free access to public footpaths, can this be progressed, perhaps utilising any unused capital receipts to assist with stile replacements?

Many thanks, Ian Young: Thornhackett Environment Champion, July 2025