



Met Office 3-month Outlook

Period: March – May 2017 Issue date: 23.02.17

The forecast presented here is for March and the average of the March-April-May period for the United Kingdom as a whole. The forecast for March will be superseded by the long-range information on the public weather forecast web page (www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/forecast/#?tab=regionalForecast), starting from 3 March 2017.

This forecast is based on information from observations, several numerical prediction systems and expert judgement.

SUMMARY – PRECIPITATION:

During March, above- and below-average precipitation are almost equally probable. For March-April-May as a whole, above-average precipitation is slightly more probable than below-average.

The probability that UK-average precipitation for March-April-May will fall into the driest of our five categories is 15% and the probability that it will fall into the wettest of our five categories is between 20% and 25% (the 1981-2010 probability for each of these categories is 20%).

CONTEXT:

Spring is the time of year with the lowest UK precipitation on average (figure P1). As highlighted in the temperature outlook, currently there are relatively few drivers of predictability. A weak stratospheric polar vortex, and the possibility of a sudden stratospheric warming (SSW) event, could potentially influence weather patterns in late-March and April. This effect increases the chances of cold and dry conditions during that period.

In March, the Met Office seasonal prediction system shows approximately similar chances of above- and below-average precipitation (figure P2). This reflects the fact that while there is an increased chance of a wet start to the month, the likelihood of a

return to more blocked weather patterns with drier weather increases as the month goes on.

During the 3-month season (March-April-May), forecast systems predict there will likely be competing influences from wetter westerly and drier blocked weather patterns. Overall, the result is a slightly higher chance of wetter-than-normal conditions, as can be seen in the right-hand graph of figure P2, which shows only a slight shift towards above-average precipitation. This outlook gives no particular indication, therefore, that the precipitation deficit that has arisen in the last 6 months in many parts of the UK is likely to substantially diminish.

Fig P1

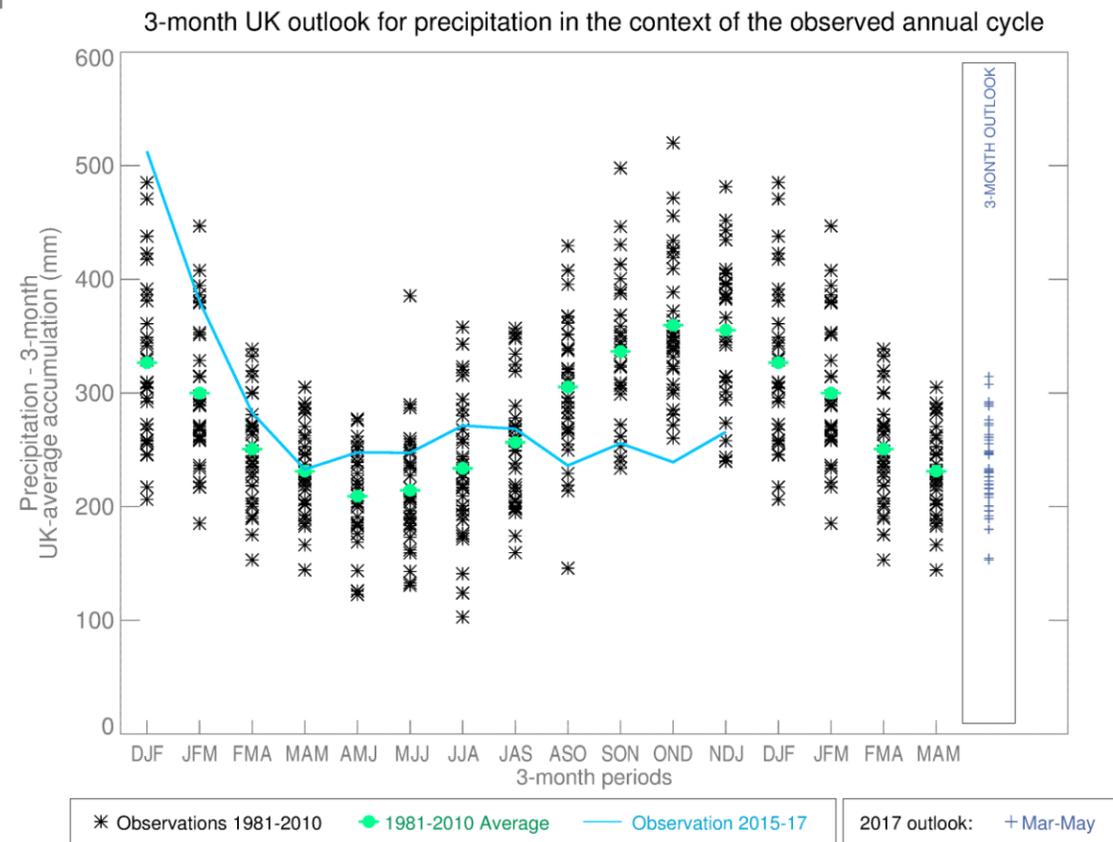


Fig P2

1-month and 3-month UK outlook for precipitation in the context of observed climatology

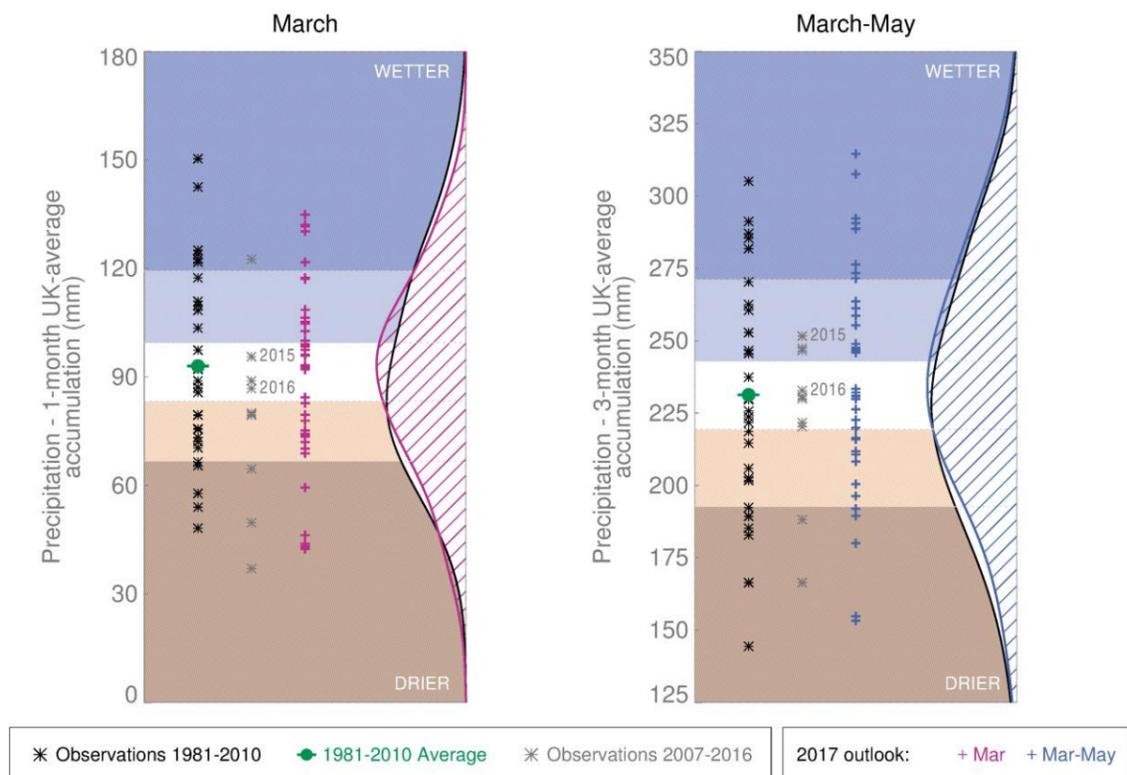
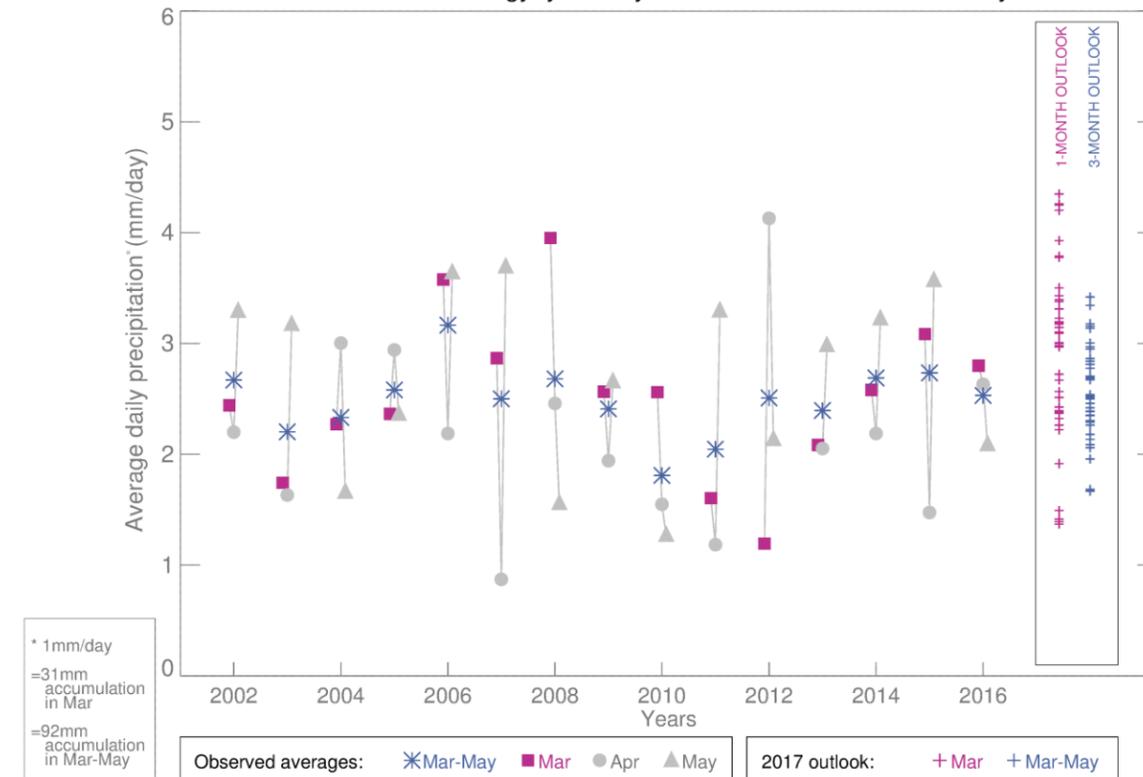


Fig P3

1-month and 3-month UK outlook for precipitation in the context of recent climatology: year-to-year and within-season variability



This Outlook provides an indication of possible temperature and rainfall conditions over the next 3 months. It is part of a suite of forecasts designed for contingency planners. The Outlook should not be used in isolation but should be used with shorter-range and more detailed (30-day, 15-day and 1-to-5-day) forecasts and warnings available to the contingency planning community from the Met Office.