News release

2006 - a year for the record books

14 December 2006

Preliminary temperature figures for 2006, released today by the Met Office and the University of East Anglia (UEA's Climatic Research Unit), show the mean surface air temperature has continued to demonstrate a warming climate, both around the globe and especially here in the UK.

Worldwide, the provisional figures for 2006 using data from January to November, place the year as the sixth warmest year. This is on a record that stretches back to 1850 (the top 10 warmest years have all occurred in the last 12 years) and it could have been warmer but for a cool start due to La Nina.

In the UK, the year has been remarkable, with the Central England Temperature series setting a succession of records. Not only have individual months set new records, but more significantly, extended periods have also done so:

- Warmest month on record set this July, with a mean temperature of 19.7 °C
- Warmest ever September (16.8 °C)
- Warmest ever April to October having a mean temperature of 14.6 °C
- Warmest ever autumn with a mean temperature of 12.6 °C

2006 is very likely to be the warmest year in terms of CET. The joint warmest years currently are 1990 and 1999, which recorded a mean temperature of 10.63 °C and with just over two weeks to the end of the year, the current mean temperature anomaly to 12 December is equivalent to an annual temperature of 10.84 °C.

Professor Phil Jones, of UEA's Climatic Research Unit, said: "This year sees the highest average temperature recorded since the Central England Temperature series began in 1659, and the rise above the average is significantly higher than that for the two hottest years we have experienced."

Met Office climate scientist David Parker said, "2006 has been quite extraordinary in terms of the UK temperature, with several records being broken. The figures support recent research from Prof David Karoly of the University of Oklahoma and Dr Peter Stott at the Met Office which showed links between human behaviour and the warming trend".

The full report on the climate of 2006 is available on the World Meteorological Organization web site. As well as information and graphics on land and sea surface temperature, it includes details on the extent of sea-ice in both hemispheres and rainfall. In September, the extent of arctic sea ice was again below average, although it has recovered slightly from 2005's all-time minimum. In the southern hemisphere, sea-ice coverage remains close to average.

More about climate change

Notes:

- The Met Office, in collaboration with the University of East Anglia (UEA), maintains a global temperature record which is used in the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.
- The CET is the world's longest instrumental record dating back to 1659. The last seasonal record to be broken was the hot summer of 1976.
- Karoly and Stott paper published online on 18 September 2006.
- The Met Office Hadley Centre receives, quality controls, and archives large amounts of observed climate data.

Mean Central England Temperatures and difference from 1961-90 average

Top ten warmest years

	Mean (°C)	Difference from 1961-90 (°C)
2006 (to 12 Dec)	10.84	+1.37
1999	10.63	+1.16
1990	10.63	+1.16
1949	10.62	+1.15
2002	10.60	+1.13
1997	10.53	+1.06
1995	10.52	+1.05
2003	10.50	+1.03
1989	10.50	+1.03
2004	10.48	+1.01

For further information:
Met Office Press Office +44 (0)1392 886655
E-mail: pressoffice@metoffice.gov.uk

Met Office Customer Centre 0870 900 0100
If you're outside the UK +44 (0)1392 885680