

March 2019

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1981-2010.

Until the 17th, March's weather was dominated by westerly and north-westerly winds and frequent rain belts moving in off the North Atlantic, interspersed with brighter showery weather. Named storms Freya and Gareth brought spells of particularly wet and windy weather for much of the country. It was mostly mild in the south but from the Midlands northwards it was occasionally cold enough for sleet and snow to penetrate to low levels. From the 18th onwards it turned generally mild and settled. It was often dry and cloudy until the 23rd but the last week was much sunnier for most parts of the country, and especially sunny over much of England.

The provisional UK mean temperature was 6.8 °C, which is 1.3 °C above the 1981-2010 long-term average, making it the 10th warmest March in a series from 1910, though it was not as warm as the March 2012 or 2017. Both mean maximum and mean minimum temperatures were between 0.5 and 2.0 °C above average with the largest positive anomalies generally in the east and south-east. It was the 5th wettest March in a series from 1910 with 140% of average rainfall, and it was particularly wet in Northern Ireland and north-west England and the Borders, with near or rather above average rainfall elsewhere. A sunny last week raised sunshine totals above the long-term average over much of the country, with 114% of average sunshine overall, but sunshine was below average in Northern Ireland and parts of western Scotland.

The UK monthly extremes were as follows: A maximum temperature of 19.8 °C was recorded at Kew Gardens (Greater London) on the 26th. A minimum temperature of -6.9 °C was recorded at Aboyne (Aberdeenshire) on the 5th. In the 24 hours ending at 0900 GMT on the 17th, 74.6 mm of rain fell at Capel Curig (Gwynedd). A wind gust of 70 knots (81 mph) was recorded at Needles (Isle of Wight) on the 16th. A snow depth of 6 cm was measured at Middleton (Derbyshire) on the 10th, and at Mugdock Park (Stirlingshire) on the 11th.

Weather impacts

Storm Freya made its way across the UK on the 3rd and 4th. In Wales, there were reports of flooding on roads, speed restrictions and closures were placed on some bridges, and the M4 elevated section near Swansea was closed; some fallen trees blocked roads and railway lines. There were power cuts in Swansea and Llandysul. Snow closed part of the A595 in Cumbria, with other roads closed and rail disruption due to fallen trees. In south-east England also, road and rail travel was disrupted due to fallen trees, and in the south-west numerous roads were closed due to fallen trees or power cables. The M48 Severn Bridge closed for a time, with the Tamar Bridge into Cornwall also closed. On the 6th in Northern Ireland, some roads were flooded or blocked by fallen trees.

Further notable weather systems, including Storm Gareth, crossed the UK from the 10th onwards. A gritting lorry crashed on the A76 and conditions were poor on the M77 in south-west Scotland. In Northern Ireland, trees and flooding blocked roads. Power cuts affected 400 homes in South Wales. There were reports of flooding on some roads, snow blocking roads on higher routes and speed restrictions on the M48 Severn Bridge and the A55 Britannia Bridge, with the A477 Cleddau Bridge closed. Some higher routes in north-west England were closed due to snow, with the Patterdale Mountain Rescue Team being called by Cumbria Police to help 33 people who were

caught up in multiple crashes. Fallen trees blocked roads in east and south-east England. Cross-Channel ferries to Kent and the Isle of Wight were delayed, the A249 bridge at Sheppey crossing was closed for a time as was the QEII Bridge. In south-west England a fisherman was rescued after spending an hour in the water after falling overboard. Landslips were reported in Kenton and on the A386 in Bideford. There was disruption to rail and road travel due to fallen trees and some river flooding, and power cuts around Newton Abbot, Exeter, Honiton, Minehead and Bridgewater. On the 12th and 13th fallen trees caused disruption to some ScotRail services. A number of ferries were disrupted and cancelled and roads were blocked due to fallen trees and flooding, with snow adding to the difficult driving conditions. Three climbers were killed on Ben Nevis with a fourth injured due to an avalanche. In Northern Ireland, a number of roads were closed, with various other services disrupted. In Wales, there were road closures due to flooding and fallen trees. Across the north of England some roads suffered flooding or fallen trees, with snow temporarily closing the Snake Pass as well as causing difficult driving conditions across north-east England. Eastern and south-east England also saw some disruption due to fallen trees, heavy rain and strong winds. In the south-west a fisherman was airlifted from a trawler off Land's End. There were reports of fallen trees, power cables and power cuts in Bristol, Martock and Teignmouth, and a cliff fall at West Bay closed the coastal path.

On the 16th there were road accidents in Scotland due to poor road conditions caused by flooding and snow. Some trunk roads in North Wales were flooded, and trains disrupted: part of the rail line at Llanrwst was washed away. Some motorists were rescued in North Wales after becoming stranded in flood water, and a landslide closed the A470. There were reports of flooding in Manchester city centre with a number of roads around Manchester flooded. In the Yorkshire Dales, some villages were cut off and a number of rivers burst their banks. Further south, Clacton Pier was closed, as was the Orwell Bridge, with some railways flooded too. In the south-west there were delays to rail services, disruption and cancellations to ferry services in Plymouth and St Mawes, and the M48 Severn Bridge was closed for a time.

The rest of March was largely settled. A large wildfire developed near Betwys-y-Coed, North Wales, covering 100 hectares on the 29th.

England diary of highlights

The first half of March was dominated by an unsettled west to north-westerly type which brought frequent rain especially to the north-west. It was generally mild, but occasionally cold enough for sleet and snow to fall to low levels, mainly from the Midlands northwards. The second half was generally settled with high pressure close by. It was generally cloudy until the 23rd, but the last week was often very sunny.

The mean temperature for March was provisionally 1.5 °C above the 1981-2010 long-term average, making it the 9th warmest March in a series from 1910. Rainfall was 139% of average, and rainfall was well above average over and to the west of the Pennines, and mostly near or slightly above average elsewhere. Sunshine was 120% of average, and sunshine was above average in central and eastern areas but below average in parts of the north-west.

1st to 9th

A ridge of high pressure brought a relatively quiet day on the 1st but it was generally cloudy with drizzle and patchy fog in places. After another cloudy day on the 2nd, rain spread into the north late in the day ahead of Storm Freya, which brought a generally wet and windy day on the 3rd with wind gusts exceeding 60 mph especially across the south-west. The 4th was a day of sunshine

and showers, the showers wintry on high ground. The next depression brought another belt of rain from the south-west on the 5th, also with a slow-moving area of persistent rain in the far north. Showers and longer spells of rain spread north-eastwards across the country on the 6th. Most places had a cloudy day with outbreaks of light to moderate rain on the 7th but the south was brighter with a mix of sunshine and showers. After a dry start to the 8th with some frost in places mainly in the north, and a minimum temperature of $-4.1\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ at Bewcastle (Cumbria), cloudy weather and a belt of rain spread from the west, followed by some light rain and drizzle. A band of rain across the north early on the 9th moved south-eastwards but turned more patchy as it headed towards the south-east, followed by brighter showery weather, and the next frontal system brought rain into the south-west late in the day. The 9th was also a generally windy day, with gales in some exposed locations.

10th to 16th

Heavy rain, with sleet, snow and thunder locally, cleared eastwards on the 10th followed by a day of sunshine and wintry showers, some of the showers wintry even at low levels with 6 cm of lying snow at Middleton (Derbyshire). A ridge of high pressure brought a quieter day on the 11th but cloud and rain spread from the west late in the day, giving 48.8 mm at Shap (Cumbria). Storm Gareth headed in on the 12th and a belt of heavy rain spread south-eastwards with hail in parts of the south-east, followed by brighter weather with isolated showers. The 13th was another windy day with gales in places and a mix of sunshine and scattered showers. Another belt of rain moved southwards across southern areas on the 14th with some intense bursts in the south-east, followed by sunshine and scattered showers. The 15th continued with sunshine and showers in the north while it was mainly dry and cloudy in the south. Another deep depression brought persistent heavy rain from the Midlands northwards on the 16th, and some short-lived snowfall in parts of the north, with some rain also moving into the south-west late in the afternoon, and the Needles (Isle of Wight) saw gusts to 70 mph.

17th to 24th

A north-westerly regime brought sunshine and showers on the 17th, and there was thunder in places, especially across the south-east. Cloudy weather with a little light rain spread into central and western areas on the 18th but the east had another day of sunshine and showers. High pressure then brought a spell of mild settled weather but with plenty of cloud and some patchy fog in places. Much of the country was dull with patchy light rain or drizzle on the 19th, and the 20th and 21st stayed generally cloudy, but the 20th was brighter in the Midlands and the 21st saw some sunshine break through particularly in the north-east. Rain reached the far north-west late on the 22nd and slowly spread south-eastwards through the 23rd, fizzling out by the time it reached southern areas, and much brighter weather followed behind, although on the 24th this was accompanied by some showers in the north.

25th to 31st

The settled and warm weather continued, generally with somewhat more sunshine. The 25th was a sunny day almost everywhere, though there was more cloud in some places, especially the north, on the 26th and 27th. Clear skies and sunshine again established over most of the country between the 28th and 30th, with 12.6 hours of sunshine at East Malling (Kent) on the 29th and a high of $19.8\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ at Kew Gardens (London) on the 30th, though patchy fog developed quite widely at night, also with slight frosts in some places. The 31st continued dry but it was generally cloudier.

Wales diary of highlights

The first half of March was dominated by an unsettled west to north-westerly type which brought frequent rain belts interspersed with brighter showery weather. The second half was settled and warm, mostly cloudy until the 23rd but sunny in the last week.

The mean temperature for March was provisionally 1.2 °C above the 1981-2010 average. Rainfall was 164% of average, making it the 7th wettest March in a series from 1910, and it was particularly wet in the north. Sunshine was generally near or a little above average, with 111% of average overall.

1st to 9th

A ridge of high pressure brought a mostly dry cloudy day on the 1st but it slowly brightened up. The 2nd was another cloudy day with some patchy rain crossing the north late morning, then more persistent rain spread from the west. Storm Freya brought a very wet and windy day on the 3rd, with gusts of over 70 mph especially in some southern parts during the afternoon. The 4th was a day of sunshine and showers, then another belt of rain spread from the south-west on the 5th, following a cold sunny start. Bands of showers and longer spells of rain moved across the country on the 6th, and the 7th was mostly cloudy with some rain, but turned more showery during the afternoon. The 8th had a slight frost in some rural parts, with a dry cloudy start followed by rain spreading from the west, and then some light rain and drizzle following behind. Rain spread south-eastwards on the 9th followed mostly dry sunny weather, but clouding over later.

10th to 18th

The changeable west to north-westerly type continued through this period. The 10th started off cloudy and windy with some heavy rain in the north and showers further south, and gales in exposed places, followed by sunshine and blustery showers with sleet and snow on high ground. A ridge of high pressure brought a cold sunny start on the 11th, but cloud increased from the west in the afternoon. Storm Gareth brought a wet and windy start on the 12th followed by sunshine and showers, and the winds increased late in the day with gales in exposed places. The winds eased on the 13th which started off with sunshine and scattered showers, then turned cloudier with a little rain. Rain spread south-eastwards on the 14th followed by sunshine and isolated showers, and it was very windy with a gust to 67 knots (77 mph) at Capel Curig (Gwynedd). The 15th was a wet and windy day for the south, particularly south-west, but drier elsewhere. The 16th was a wet day with some sleet and snow on high ground, with 74.8 mm at Capel Curig (Gwynedd). Sunshine and showers followed on the 17th, then the 18th was generally cloudy with rain in the morning which became more intermittent.

19th to 23rd

The weather turned more settled with high pressure close by, but with generally westerly winds, it remained mostly cloudy. The 19th was mostly dull and drizzly, but on the 20th the weather brightened up away from coasts during the afternoon with a maximum temperature of 19.3 °C at Hawarden (Clwyd). Cloudy weather returned on the 21st with patchy fog in places in the morning. The 22nd was another dry and generally cloudy day, with some rain reaching the north late in the afternoon. The rain fizzled as it spread southwards, but on the 23rd a little light rain developed over the south.

24th to 31st

The weather continued settled and warm and it was generally somewhat sunnier with the high pressure building further north. The 24th and 25th were both dry and sunny, although on the 24th it turned a little cloudier from the north in the afternoon. The 26th was cloudier but still with some sunny spells, and there was more sunshine and variable amounts of cloud, and under clear skies the temperature fell to -4.8 °C at St Harmon (Powys). The 28th and 29th were sunny away from the coasts, with some frost and fog overnight, and there was 12.2 hours of bright sunshine at Lake Vyrnwy (Powys) on the 29th. The 30th started off cloudy with patchy fog in places but most places became sunny by afternoon. It stayed dry on the 31st, but most places had a cloudy day.

Scotland diary of highlights

The first half of March was dominated by an unsettled west to north-westerly type which brought frequent rain and temperatures fluctuating around the long-term average, and it was particularly wet around the Borders. The second half was more settled and it was generally warm, but it was often cloudy, particularly in the west.

The mean temperature for March was provisionally 1.1 °C above the long-term average. It was a very wet month around the Borders, with near or rather above average rainfall in most other parts of the country. Sunshine was well above average in Aberdeenshire but was below average in parts of the west and south-west. Overall Scotland had 131% of average rainfall and 106% of average sunshine.

1st to 8th

A ridge of high pressure brought a relatively quiet day on the 1st, but it was generally cloudy with some light rain or drizzle in places, and there was some patchy fog in the south during the morning. After a bright start in the north and east on the 2nd, wet and windy weather spread from the west. The 3rd started off bright and showery for most, but rain spread from the south from mid-afternoon, associated with Storm Freya. This cleared by the 4th leaving sunshine and wintry showers. The north-east had a sharp frost early on the 5th, with a minimum of -6.9 °C at Aboyne (Aberdeenshire), and bands of locally heavy rain and/or sleet affected central and southern parts during the day. The 6th was a dull wet day, but the rain slowly cleared eastwards on the 7th followed by sunshine and scattered showers. The 8th started off with a widespread frost, but bands of rain, initially with sleet and snow over high ground, spread from the west.

9th to 17th

The 9th had a mix of sunshine and wintry showers, with some more general rain over the south-west. Rain, with sleet and snow locally, spread eastwards early on the 10th followed by a mix of sunshine and blustery showers, the showers falling widely as hail, sleet and snow. A ridge of high pressure led to a frost in some rural parts early on the 11th, followed by a drier day but rain spread into the far west by dusk. There was a snow depth of 6 cm at Mugdock Park (Stirlingshire). Showers and longer spells of rain spread across the country on the 12th associated with Storm Gareth, with 42.8 mm at Aviemore (Inverness-shire) and a gust to 65 knots at Machrihanish (Argyll). The 13th was another windy day with sunshine and scattered showers, then another rain belt moved across the country overnight 13th/14th, followed by another windy day with sunshine and showers on the 14th. After another showery day on the 15th, the 16th was a wet day with some sleet and snow on higher ground and briefly to low levels in the morning. The 17th saw a return to sunshine and showers.

18th to 24th

The weather turned more settled but it was often cloudy. The 18th started bright and frosty in southern and eastern parts but cloudier skies and some rain spread from the west. It was mostly cloudy and drizzly from the 19th to 21st, but the north-east had some sunshine on the 19th and 21st, and there was a maximum of 16.9 °C at Edinburgh Botanic Gardens on the 20th. Rain spread south-eastwards across the country on the 22nd followed by sunshine and showers, but it stayed dry in the north-east. The 23rd and 24th both had a mix of sunshine and showers. Most eastern parts stayed dry on the 23rd, but there were more showers on the 24th, when they turned wintry in places, particularly in the north.

25th to 31st

The 25th had a cold bright start with some scattered showers in the north, then turned cloudier. It was more settled from the 26th to 28th with high pressure close to the south but it remained mostly cloudy. There was some light rain in central and northern parts on the 26th and 27th, though the 26th had some sunshine in the north-east. Sunshine developed more widely in central and southern areas on the 28th, while the rain in the far north quickly died out. The 29th was another cloudy day for many parts, with rain in the far north, but many eastern parts were sunny following a frosty start in places. Rain spread southwards over the Borders by mid-afternoon on the 30th with sunshine and scattered showers elsewhere, and it turned cooler. Most places were sunny on the 31st but with some patchy rain for the Shetland Isles and across southern areas mid-afternoon, and Tiree (Inner Hebrides) recorded 11.7 hours of bright sunshine.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

Until the 17th it was very wet with mainly westerly and north-westerly winds and frequent belts of rain interspersed with brighter showery weather. The weather became progressively more settled during the second half.

The mean temperature for March was provisionally 0.8 °C above the long-term average. It was the wettest March in a series from 1910 with 167% of average, with more than twice the normal rainfall amount in parts of the south. Most of the rain fell in the first half of the month. Sunshine was 89% of average, with below average sunshine in the south and near average sunshine in the north.

1st to 9th

A ridge of high pressure brought a dry bright morning for most on the 1st but cloud and rain spread from the west, reaching all parts by dusk. More rain spread eastwards on the 2nd, followed by sunshine and showers. Storm Freya brought rain from the south from mid-afternoon on 2nd, with sleet and snow in places, mainly on high ground, after dark. The 4th was a day of sunshine and showers with some longer spells of rain also, with sleet and snow on high ground. Another rain belt affected all areas on the morning of the 5th, with 36.4 mm at Lough Fea (Ulster), followed by brighter weather with showers. Another depression brought persistent rain on the morning of the 6th, with further bands of showers and longer spells of rain in the afternoon but some drier intervals in between, though it remained cloudy. Rain cleared early on the 7th followed by sunshine and scattered showers. A ridge of high pressure led to some overnight frost in rural parts early on the 8th, then rain spread eastwards through all parts followed by showers and just occasional sunny intervals. The 9th was generally a day of sunshine and blustery showers, following a wet start in the north-west.

10th to 17th

The 10th was a day of sunshine and blustery, wintry showers, with 4 cm of lying snow at Lough Fea (Ulster) and Trassey (County Down). A ridge of high pressure brought a mostly sunny cold start on the 11th but rain spread from the west into most parts by dusk. Storm Gareth brought a cloudy breezy start on the 12th followed by sunshine and showers, and there were gales in places with a maximum gust of 60 knots (69 mph) at Orlock Head (County Down). The winds eased on the 13th but remained strong, and showers died out in the early afternoon but were replaced by more general rain for northern and central counties by dusk. There was a mix of sunshine and showers on the 14th and 15th, with some more general rain moving into the west on the afternoon of the 14th. A secondary depression brought wet and windy weather on the 16th with some sleet and snow on higher ground, clearing to sunshine and blustery showers during the afternoon, and the showery regime continued on the 17th.

18th to 24th

High pressure moved closer, but the weather stayed quite unsettled. There was rain for all parts on the morning of the 18th, which turned more showery in the afternoon. The 19th, 20th and 21st were cloudy with mist and some drizzle, but despite the cloud and drizzle the temperature reached 16.5 °C at Castlederg (County Tyrone) on the 20th. A rain belt moved south-eastwards through the country on the 22nd, followed by sunshine and showers. The 23rd started off mostly dry and sunny but turned cloudier with scattered showers, and the 24th was another day of sunshine and showers, the showers heavier and more widespread in the afternoon.

25th to 31st

It turned more settled during this period with variable amounts of cloud. The 25th started bright but clouded over from late morning with occasional showers. The 26th was a cloudy day with a little rain, but some sunshine broke through at times on the 27th, and after some early low cloud the 28th was a sunny day. Cloudy weather returned on the 29th and 30th, also with some light rain on the 30th as a weak front moved southwards. Clearer weather followed behind, and the 31st was a much sunnier day with 11.4 hours of bright sunshine at Magilligan (County Londonderry) and under the clearer skies the temperature fell to -3.6 °C at Castlederg (County Tyrone).