

February 2020

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

February opened with four days of changeable westerlies, then high pressure briefly moved across the country between the 5th and 7th bringing settled weather with sunshine and frosty nights to many central and southern counties. The rest of the month was windy and exceptionally wet, with rain frequently moving in from the west and south-west and giving large totals. Storm Ciara on the 9th and Storm Dennis on the 15th brought exceptional rainfall totals to much of the country, and it was also very wet on the 28th with Storm Jorge. In between the rain belts, there were brighter spells and blustery showers, and the showers were wintry at times, especially in the north, but any lying snow on low ground was short-lived.

The provisional UK mean temperature was 5.1 °C, which is 1.4 °C above the 1981-2010 long-term average. Both mean maximum and minimum temperatures were less than 0.5 °C above average over much of Scotland and Northern Ireland, but were 2 to 3 °C above average in southern England and parts of the Midlands, East Anglia and south Wales. Frosts were notably fewer than average. It was the wettest February in a series from 1862, with 237% of average, and some locations had over 400% of the long-term average, but rainfall was near normal in parts of north-east Scotland. Sunshine was 104% of average, and it was a dull month in most western areas but sunnier than normal in the east, especially around Aberdeenshire, and sunshine was also slightly above average in Northern Ireland.

The UK monthly extremes were as follows: A maximum temperature of 16.0 °C was recorded at East Malling (Kent) on the 16th. A minimum temperature of -10.2 °C was recorded at Braemar (Aberdeenshire) on the 13th. In the 24 hours ending at 0900 GMT on the 20th, 180.4 mm of rain fell at Honister Pass (Cumbria). A wind gust of 84 knots (97 mph) was recorded at Needles (Isle of Wight) on the 9th. A snow depth of 23 cm was recorded at Copley (Durham) on the 24th.

Weather impacts

After a relatively quiet first week, Storm Ciara brought very wet and windy weather and considerable disruption between the 8th and 10th. Flooding and falling debris widely caused disruption to road and rail travel, and the M11 and A505 were closed for 24 hours due to an unsafe hanger roof at Duxford Air Museum. Some bridges, notably on the M4, M25, A14 and A249, were closed or had restrictions for much of the 9th. Flights were affected, and one flight needed 4 attempts to land at Gatwick Airport. There were overturned lorries on the M1 between junctions 14 and 15 and the A96 near to Inverness Airport, and parts of the A628 and M62 were closed to high sided vehicles. Some ferries across the Irish Sea were cancelled, and the P&O North Sea ferry to Hull had an 8 hour delay. Power outages in Wales, Northern Ireland and England affected about 100,000 customers in total. Three people were injured in Perth, Scotland when a pub roof collapsed, and in Hampshire, England, a man died when a tree fell on his car.

As Storm Ciara cleared away between the 10th and 14th, snow showers and further flooding caused some disruption to transport, some vehicles were stranded, notably on the A702 Dalveen Pass, Dumfries and Galloway, and on the A470 in North Wales, and some schools were closed in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

On the 16th, Storm Dennis brought even wetter weather, exacerbating the problems with flooding. Most parts of the UK saw impacts from flooding, standing water, fallen trees and landslips, many

railways and roads were affected, and some people had to be evacuated from their homes. Most of the major bridges had restrictions or closures, and ferries in Northern Ireland and the Solent were cancelled. Sports events were widely cancelled, and storm surges affected some roads in Northern Ireland.

The weather continued wet and windy during the rest of February and so the problems with flooding persisted, especially in Scotland, Northern Ireland, north-east England, Wales and the Midlands. Roads, railways, homes and businesses were widely disrupted. Some of the precipitation fell as snow, particularly on high ground and in the north, adding to the disruption. In Northern Ireland, Lough Erne levels increased and cut off some houses by making local roads impassable.

England diary of highlights

February opened with four days of mild changeable weather, then high pressure briefly crossed the country between the 5th and 7th bringing settled weather. The rest of the month was exceptionally wet, with frequent belts of persistent heavy rain crossing the country, interspersed with brighter showery weather. Flooding was consequently widespread during the second half of the month. In the brighter showery spells, some of the showers were wintry but lying snow was mostly restricted to high ground.

The mean temperature for February was provisionally 2.1 °C above the 1981-2010 long-term average, but it was not as warm as February 2019. It was the wettest February in a series from 1862, with 258% of the long-term average. Except in East Anglia and coastal parts of the north-east, most places had over 200% of the average, with over 300% in some places. Sunshine was 107% of average, and it was generally cloudier than normal in the west, but sunnier than normal in the east.

1st to 7th

The 1st was bright and breezy with sunshine and isolated showers for most, but with outbreaks of rain in the north-west. An area of rain spread from the south-west overnight 1st/2nd but cleared away eastwards by mid-morning on the 2nd, followed by drier but still cloudy weather. The 3rd started off bright with some showers for the north-west, then further rain spread from the south-west. Most places were dry on the 4th but sunshine was limited, with any isolated showers mainly near coasts. High pressure moved in on the 5th so most parts were fine and bright, with frost and fog patches overnight, but it was cloudier in the north. Almost all parts were dry and sunny on the 6th, but cloud spread from the west on the 7th, associated with the next frontal system.

8th to 14th

Storm Ciara was the stand-out feature of this period. Rain crossed the country overnight 7th/8th, clearing East Anglia and the south-east on the morning of the 8th, followed by brighter weather, but wind and rain spread into parts of the Midlands and north from late afternoon. Storm Ciara hit on the 9th, bringing gusts to 97 mph at Needles (Isle of Wight), and heavy persistent rain spread across the country, with some thunder locally. Three days of sunshine and showers followed on the 10th, 11th and 12th, with the showers mostly falling as rain, hail and sleet on low ground but with snow on high ground, and Spadeadam (Cumbria) only reached 0.8 °C on the 11th. The showers also produced isolated thunderstorms, and it remained very windy, especially in the north. The 12th generally had fewer showers and less-strong winds than the 10th and 11th. After a cold night in the far north with a minimum of -5.3 °C at Redesdale (Northumberland), another depression brought further rain on the 13th which became slow-moving in the north-east, followed by sunshine and showers, with isolated thunder near the south coast. Rain moved into the north-west on the 14th, spreading slowly south-east but tending to die out away from the south-west.

15th to 23rd

Storm Dennis brought a windy and exceptionally wet day on the 15th, with persistent, locally heavy, rain affecting all parts. The rain was slow to clear the south-east on the 16th, and East Malling (Kent) fell no lower than 11.1 °C overnight 15th/16th. Brighter showery weather followed into the north and west, and the 17th and 18th were generally bright, showery and windy. Frontal systems brought belts of rain eastwards on both the 19th and 20th, and Honister Pass (Cumbria) recorded 180.4 mm in the 24 hours from 0900 on the 19th. Brighter showery weather followed from the west late on the 20th. Rain cleared East Anglia early on the 21st leaving a dry day for many, but with persistent rain in the north-west, and it was very windy with gales in exposed parts. Cloud and rain became slow-moving in the south on the 22nd, though tending to fizzle out, with brighter showery weather in the north, the showers wintry on high ground. Further rain in the south later on the 22nd became more widespread early on the 23rd but cleared southwards, followed again by brighter showery weather. It was very mild in the south with a high of 16.0 °C at East Malling (Kent).

24th to 29th

A belt of rain spread north-eastwards on the 24th, turning to snow for a time in the north and giving 23 cm of lying snow at Copley (Durham), followed by milder weather with sunshine and showers. The 25th and 26th had sunshine and showers, the showers wintry in places, especially on high ground, with thunder locally, and many places saw hail. Showers were fewer on the 26th, when Preston Cove House (Dorset) recorded 9.8 hours of bright sunshine. Rain then spread eastwards across southern areas overnight, clearing the south-east on the 27th followed by sunshine and just isolated showers, these wintry in the north. The 28th was another very wet day with sleet to low levels in the north and snow on high ground. The rain cleared away by noon on the 29th leaving sunshine and showers and isolated thunderstorms, and the showers were again wintry in places, especially on high ground. Persistent rain, with sleet and snow on high ground, spread into the north from late afternoon.

Wales diary of highlights

The first week of February was relatively quiet, but the rest of the month was exceptionally wet and often windy, with frequent frontal systems moving in from the west bringing persistent and at times heavy rain. In between the rain there was some brighter showery weather, and the showers were wintry at times, especially late in the month, but with lying snow mainly restricted to high ground.

The mean temperature for the month was provisionally 1.9 °C above the 1981-2010 long-term average. It was the wettest February in a series from 1862, with 260% of the long-term average, and some locations had more than three times the normal rainfall amount. Sunshine was 91% of average.

1st to 7th

The month opened with a few days of westerly winds. The 1st was a mostly bright, windy, showery day and very mild with Dale Fort (Dyfed) not falling below 9.2°C overnight. Rain spread through the country overnight 1st/2nd, followed by a cloudy day on the 2nd with outbreaks of rain mainly for central parts. The 3rd and 4th were mostly cloudy with scattered showers, and some more general rain spread into the far south late on the 3rd. High pressure ridged in from the west between the 5th and 7th, giving two mostly dry sunny days on the 5th and 6th, although the 5th was rather cloudy in the north-west. The intervening night was frosty with a minimum of -5.6 °C at St Harmon (Powys) early on the 6th. It turned cloudier and wetter from the west on the 7th as the next frontal systems approached.

8th to 14th

After rain had crossed the country overnight, the 8th started bright, before more wet and windy weather spread from the west. Storm Ciara arrived on the 9th bringing very mild, wet and windy weather, and despite the extensive cloud and rain there was a high of 14.6 °C at Hawarden (Clwyd). There were also gusts to 93 mph at Aberdaron (Gwynedd). The 10th to 12th were mostly bright and showery, and a longer spell of rain crossed the country from late morning on the 10th. The showers were wintry on the 11th, especially over high ground, with a high of only 2.3 °C at Lake Vyrnwy (Powys). Showers became fewer before further rain spread northwards across Wales overnight 12th/13th, followed by another day of sunshine and showers with isolated thunderstorms in the morning. After a bright start to the 14th, more rain spread from the west.

15th to 23rd

Storm Dennis brought an exceptionally wet day on the 15th, with 124.8 mm at Maerdy (Mid Glamorgan), and strong winds. The rain cleared slowly south-eastwards on the 16th followed by sunshine and blustery showers, accompanied locally by thunder. There were showers and longer spells of rain on the 17th and 18th, though with some sunshine in between. A belt of rain spread eastwards through the country on the 19th and another rain belt followed on the 20th, clearing in the afternoon, followed by sunshine and blustery showers, the showers wintry over high ground. Persistent rain affected most areas on the 21st, though the rain was lighter and patchier in the south, and it was again windy. The 22nd and 23rd were mostly cloudy with further rain at times, but brighter showery weather spread from the north-west on the 23rd.

24th to 29th

Widespread, locally heavy rain affected all parts early on the 24th, with sleet and snow on higher ground, followed by brighter showery weather. The 25th and 26th saw a mix of sunshine and wintry showers, the showers locally thundery also. Lying snow was mainly restricted to high ground, and was 8 cm deep at Lake Vyrnwy (Powys) on the 26th. There were fewer showers on the 27th, when Valley (Gwynedd) recorded 8.7 hours of bright sunshine. The 28th was very wet and windy, with sleet and snow on higher ground. There was a mix of sunshine and wintry showers on the 29th, the showers locally accompanied by thunder, and a more general area of rain, with sleet and snow on high ground, spread eastwards from late afternoon.

Scotland diary of highlights

It was relatively quiet at times during the first week, but from the 8th onwards the weather was generally very wet and windy with rain bands regularly moving in from the west, interspersed with brighter showery weather. Sleet and snow fell frequently on high ground, but any lying snow at low levels was short-lived.

The mean temperature for February was provisionally 0.4 °C above the long-term average. It was the second wettest February in a series from 1862, with 213% of average. Rainfall was near average in parts of the north-east but most other parts of the country had well over twice the normal rainfall amount. Sunshine was 104% of average, being generally below average in the west, but well above normal in Aberdeenshire.

1st to 7th

The 1st started off cloudy, windy and mild with an overnight minimum of 8.7 °C at Dunbar (East Lothian). Rain and drizzle moved south-east during the day but tended to die away. After a cold night in the north, rain moved steadily north-eastwards on the 2nd, with sleet and snow on higher ground, followed later by brighter showery weather from the west. The 3rd and 4th had a mix of sunshine and showers, with more showers on the 3rd than on the 4th, but most eastern counties

stayed dry. High pressure brought more settled weather on the 5th and 6th, and it was sunny for most eastern areas, but a westerly flow brought more cloud to the west. Most areas started cold and bright on the 7th with frost in some places, and fog was slow to clear from Perthshire, Fife and Angus, but cloud increased in the west with rain spreading in later.

8th to 14th

After rain had crossed the country overnight, the 8th started bright before further cloud and rain spread from the west, reaching all parts by early evening, with 84.8 mm at Garls Craig (Lanarkshire). Storm Ciara arrived on the 9th, bringing very strong winds, heavy persistent rain and isolated thunderstorms, but the far north-east missed most of the rain. There was a mix of sunshine and wintry showers from the 10th to 12th, with thunder locally, particularly in the west and south. A ridge of high pressure brought a cold clear night to the north on 12th/13th with a minimum of -10.2 °C at Braemar (Aberdeenshire), before a band of rain, sleet and snow moved into central and southern areas and stalled, dying out by dusk. Another area of rain, with sleet and snow on high ground, spread from the west on the 14th, followed by sunshine and showers.

15th to 23rd

Storm Dennis arrived on the 15th and brought widespread heavy persistent rain, with isolated thunderstorms in the Western Isles. The 16th to 18th were mostly showery and blustery, with some longer spells of rain at times, some thunder locally, and wintry precipitation on higher ground. After a mainly dry start on the 19th, a belt of rain spread from the south-west. More rain promptly crossed the country early on the 20th, followed by sunshine and showers, the showers wintry at times, and it turned increasingly windy, but the north-east had fewer showers. Most places were dull, wet and windy on the 21st, with gusts to 82 mph at Lerwick (Shetland), but the north-east was dry with some sunshine. The 22nd and 23rd had a mix of sunshine and blustery wintry showers, and there was some more persistent rain in the south until late morning on the 23rd.

24th to 29th

A band of rain, sleet and snow spread from the south on the 24th, heavy in places. Lying snow penetrated to low ground in some areas, and was widespread on high ground, with a maximum temperature of only 0.3 °C at Braemar (Aberdeenshire). The 25th to 27th saw a mix of sunshine and wintry showers, with widespread hail and isolated thunderstorms, but eastern counties stayed mostly dry. Charterhall (Berwickshire) recorded 9.0 hours of sunshine on the 27th, while Loch Glascarnoch (Ross & Cromarty) reported 10 cm of lying snow. Rain spread north-eastwards through the country on the 28th, and was slow to clear the north on the 29th, with sunshine and wintry showers following; further rain, sleet and snow then spread north-east into central and southern districts from mid-afternoon.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

February started mild and changeable, but with a brief settled interlude on the 5th and 6th. The rest of the month was very wet with frontal systems frequently moving from west to east and giving substantial rainfall totals, with brighter showery weather in between. During the brighter showery spells, the showers were often wintry but with lying snow mainly restricted to high ground.

The provisional mean temperature for February was 0.3 °C above the long-term average. It was the wettest February in a series from 1862, with 267% of average, but despite the rain, sunshine was 105% of average.

1st to 7th

The 1st began cloudy, breezy and mild, with a minimum of 7.9 °C at Ballywatticock (County Down), and blustery showers affected most parts, spreading south-east but tending to die out later. The 2nd started off cloudy with some light rain, turning brighter in the afternoon with scattered showers. There was a mix of sunshine and wintry showers on the 3rd, then the showers were more isolated on the 4th as high pressure approached from the west. The high pressure brought a dry sunny day on the 5th, but it clouded over in most areas on the 6th. Katesbridge (County Down) fell to -3.4 °C on both the 5th and 6th. Rain belts spread from the west on the 7th, with an area of persistent rain and drizzle spreading in from mid-afternoon.

8th to 14th

After a bright start to the 8th, rain quickly spread from the west to all parts, turning heavy in places. Storm Ciara brought further heavy rain and strong winds on the 9th, followed by sunshine and blustery showers, some heavy with thunder. There was a mix of sunshine and wintry showers from the 10th to 12th, with isolated thunderstorms, and the temperature only reached 0.8 °C on the 11th at Trassey Slievenaman (County Down). A combination of daytime showers and subsequent overnight rain gave 50.2 mm at Trassey Slievenaman in the 24 hours starting at 0900 on the 12th. The rain, with sleet and snow on higher ground, soon cleared east on the morning of the 13th followed by brighter weather with just isolated showers. More rain spread eastwards across the country during the morning of the 14th, followed by sunshine and showers.

15th to 23rd

Storm Dennis brought very wet and windy weather on the 15th, and there was thunder locally in the west during the afternoon. The 16th to 18th inclusive had a mix of sunshine and blustery showers, again with isolated thunderstorms in the west on the afternoon of the 16th. Areas of rain spread from west to east on the 19th, with rain turning patchier for a time later on. Rain quickly cleared away eastwards on the 20th followed by sunshine and blustery showers with isolated thunderstorms, and showers were wintry on high ground. The 21st was a dull wet day but despite the cloud cover it was very mild with a maximum of 13.1 °C at Murlough (County Down). It was mostly cloudy with wintry, blustery and locally thundery showers on the 22nd. Widespread rain early on the 23rd cleared southwards followed by sunshine and scattered showers.

24th to 29th

Rain spread from the south-west early on the 24th, and there was sleet and snow over higher ground with 13 cm of lying snow at Lough Fea (County Londonderry). The rain cleared away by late morning leaving brighter weather with scattered showers. There was a mix of sunshine and wintry showers from the 25th to 27th, but with fewer showers on the 27th, when Katesbridge recorded 7.7 hours of sunshine. Persistent rain moved east on the 28th followed by brighter conditions with isolated showers. A spell of persistent rain spread east to all parts by early afternoon on the 29th, and it was very windy with gusts to 73 mph at Orlock Head (County Down), with thunder locally, and sleet and snow on higher ground.