

Britain Has Entered a New Climate

By Don Sutherland

Climate change is taking the United Kingdom into an entirely new and hotter climate. Airport runways, malfunctioning sensors, and urbanization have little to do with these changes. There are no asphalt tarmacs or dense urban metropolises in the offshore waters experiencing a growing number of marine heatwaves. Fossil fuel-driven greenhouse gas-induced warming is mainly responsible for these outcomes.

[*The State of the UK Climate 2025*](#) report documents a country undergoing rapid and increasingly visible climatic change. 2025 was the warmest recorded year in the United Kingdom, while the decade from 2016 to 2025 was substantially warmer than previous reference periods. Record warmth was not confined to a single season: the UK experienced its warmest spring and summer, with every month from March through August ranking among the ten warmest on record. Extreme heat is also rising faster than average temperatures, bringing more days above 30°C (86°F) and more unusually warm nights, especially in southern and urban areas.

The changes extend well beyond air temperature. Northwest European waters experienced an unprecedented number of marine-heatwave days, while sea level around the UK continued its accelerating rise. Rainfall patterns are becoming more uneven, with wetter winters, more frequent extremely wet months and the continuing threat of severe seasonal drought. Spring 2025 was England's driest in more than a century, demonstrating that a warmer climate can intensify both flooding and water scarcity. Record sunshine and exceptionally low river flows further illustrated how several interconnected parts of the climate system are shifting at the same time.

The report's central conclusion is that the United Kingdom is no longer experiencing climate change primarily as a sequence of isolated records. It is entering a different climate regime. Conditions once regarded as exceptional, such as record heat, tropical nights, marine heatwaves, intense winter rainfall and prolonged dry spells, are becoming increasingly characteristic of the present climate. The greatest risks emerge not simply from gradual warming, but from the rapid intensification of extremes that place growing pressure on public health, water supplies, agriculture, infrastructure, ecosystems and coastal communities.

The United Kingdom is not merely witnessing a temporary period of unusual weather. It is living through the consequences of a human-altered climate, with each new record serving as another chapter in a story whose ending will depend on how rapidly emissions are reduced. How rapidly emissions are reduced remains a matter of choice, and it's a choice with relatively well-known consequences drawn from a large body of scientific research.

Meanwhile, 2026 is producing more hot extremes. For the first time on record, the UK has reached 35.0°C (95°F) in May, June, and July.