

England – 2013

In 2013, British residents took 102 million overnight trips in England, totalling 297 million nights away from home, with expenditure of £18.7 billion. £184 was spent per trip, and with an average trip length of 2.9 nights, the average spend per night was £63.

The number of domestic trips was 3% lower than in 2012, and the amount spent fell by 4% (in nominal terms).

The South West Region – 2013

From a regional perspective the indications are that there was a slow start to the year for tourism in the South West and business levels were unpredictable away from the peak periods. However, a good summer saw tourism levels increase and the overall year performance was also boosted by increased numbers of overseas visitors to the region.

In terms of UK staying visitors the South West saw decreases of 2% for both trips and nights but a 3% increase in spend compared to 2012.

Overseas trips to the region increased by 11%, nights increased by 9% and spend by 13% compared to 2012.

Day visits to the South West are estimated to have decreased by 2% and day visit spend by 4% compared to 2012. Visits to urban locations saw a decrease of 7% and spend in rural locations decreased by an estimated 22%.

2013 Month by Month Impacts

	<u>Weather impacts</u>	<u>Economic impacts</u>
<u>January</u>	<p>The month was one of some contrasts. It began very mild with little rain for England and Wales and temperatures significantly above average for the time of year. By mid-month it had turned significantly colder across most of the country. A succession of weather systems meeting this cold air led to a period of significant snowfall across much of the country causing considerable disruption between 18th and 25th January. A change to milder, wetter, windy conditions in the last few days of the month led to a rapid thaw and some localised flooding.</p> <p>The UK mean temperature was 3.3 °C which is 0.4 °C below the 1981-2010 average. Scotland was marginally warmer than average, but England and Wales were colder. January was slightly drier than average in most areas, with the exception of Northern Ireland and a few localised areas in England and Wales. The UK overall had 88% of the average January rainfall. It was also a rather dull month with 79% of the long term average. Northern Ireland, southern and eastern Scotland, north west England and north Wales were particularly dull.</p> <p>Significant snowfalls occurred during Friday 18th January as frontal systems attempted to push across the UK from the west. The heaviest snowfalls occurred across parts of south Wales, with around 25 cm in some locations, but much of south-west, southern, central and northern England, and north Wales were affected. Further snowfalls affected parts of south-east and eastern England, including the London area, over the weekend of 19th/20th January. By 21st January the heaviest falls were across north-east England and eastern Scotland.</p> <p>The snowfalls caused significant disruption across the UK. Roads and railways were affected, including hundreds of motorists who became trapped on the M6 motorway on 25th. There were flight delays and cancellations at many airports, including Heathrow, and thousands of schools were closed.</p> <p>A rapid thaw and heavy rain then shifted concerns to flooding across many parts of the country, which caused further disruptions to the transport</p>	<p>The North Sea oil industry challenged the official Office for National Statistics (ONS) figures and insisted it is not to blame for the British economy's worse than-expected performance. The ONS figures suggest that two-thirds of the downturn in fourth quarter GDP was down to low output of oil and gas as a result of protracted platform maintenance programmes.</p> <p>According to the official data collectors, a slump in production from the UK's largest offshore field, Buzzard, led to the biggest decline in mining and quarrying output since official records began, down 10.2%. That left activity in the wider production sector, which includes oil production, some 1.8% lower quarter-on-quarter. But Oil & Gas UK, the North Sea industry lobby group, said Buzzard was back in operation at the end of the third quarter and a picture of plunging volumes was contradicted by other government statistics.</p> <p>The other excuses:</p> <p>Rain In the spring of last year, the ONS blamed unusually wet weather that deterred shoppers and hit construction activity for a 0.7% second quarter drop.</p> <p>Snow In the run-up to Christmas 2010 the UK was blanketed in snow. Transport ground to a halt, Heathrow was paralysed and shoppers stayed at home. The ONS said it was a major factor causing a fourth quarter fall of 0.5%.</p> <p>Eurozone crisis In the first quarter of 2012, the ONS said blame for a 0.2% contraction could be partly laid at the Eurozone's door following the second Greek crisis. There was a real fear that the single currency might fall apart at any moment and consumer confidence suffered.</p> <p>North Sea In the latest figures, a fall in North Sea oil output dragged down the figures. It is not the first time that temporary cuts in production have been blamed for a GDP fall.</p> <p>Royal wedding William and Kate's nuptials caused havoc with the GDP figures in 2011. The royal wedding followed a warm Easter weekend and huge numbers of workers took the week off. The economy, apart from grocers selling barbecue food, suffered –</p>

	<p>network. The end of the month also brought some strong or severe gales, causing some travel disruption particularly in north Scotland.</p>	<p>growing by only 0.2% in the second quarter, down from the 0.5% growth in the previous three months.</p> <p>The jubilee holiday</p> <p>One think tank said that without the extra bank holiday given to celebrate the Queen's 60 years on the throne in June last year, Britain would have emerged from recession. It estimated the jubilee wiped 0.4 percentage points off growth in the second quarter.</p>
<p><u>February</u></p>	<p><u>Weather impacts</u></p>	<p><u>Economic impacts</u></p>
	<p>The month was rather unsettled during the first half, but much more settled for the second half as high pressure brought mainly dry but often cloudy conditions with lower temperatures. This was the longest spell of dry weather of the whole winter. Any snowfalls that occurred were no more than would be expected in a typical winter.</p> <p>Temperatures for February were somewhat below normal, continuing the 'cold but not particularly so' theme of December and January. The UK mean temperature was 2.8 °C, which is 0.9 °C below the 1981-2010 average. February was somewhat drier than average in most areas, and the vast majority of the rain fell in the first half of the month. The UK overall had 66 % of the average February rainfall. It was a relatively sunny month with 113 % of the long-term average sunshine for the UK overall. Scotland and Northern Ireland were particularly sunny, but it was duller over southern England.</p> <p>In contrast to recent months, there were few major weather events impacting the UK during February. A number of snow events occurred through the month, but these were generally relatively short-lived. A wind gust of 78 mph was recorded at Cudrose (Cornwall) during the 4th.</p>	<p>The economy performed better than expected across 2012 despite output shrinking in the final quarter, it grew 0.3% according to official figures released during the month.</p> <p>The Office for National Statistics (ONS), in its second estimate for the fourth quarter, maintained its finding that output fell by 0.3% between October and December. Slow wage growth hitting consumers' pockets was a major factor. However, compared with a year ago, the UK economy was 0.3% bigger - better than the first reading which suggested output was flat. This means Britain is only a small revision away from having never suffered a double-dip recession at all.</p> <p>The better-than-expected scenario was a boost to Chancellor George Osborne ahead of his Budget in March. However, the fourth quarter's output performance continues to highlight the risk of a triple-dip recession.</p> <p>During February, ratings agency Moody's downgraded Britain's triple A credit rating, citing weak growth which it said was damaging the Government's fiscal targets and the move dominated debate between Ed Miliband and David Cameron during Prime Minister's Questions.</p> <p>According to the ONS output in the service sector, which makes up 75% of the UK economy, fell by 0.1% in the final quarter of 2012.</p> <p>Industrial production was the big loser, contracting by 1.9% - its biggest decline since the first quarter of 2009 - while construction output grew by 0.9%.</p> <p>Activity surveys for the first quarter of 2013 have given a mixed picture but have so far pointed to a picture of slight GDP growth for the period which, if realised, would mean the UK avoiding a new third period of recession. Economists believe the continued and deepening squeeze on consumer spending as a result of low wage growth and rising prices is one of the greatest risks.</p>

		Chris Williamson, of Markit, said: "With political tensions rising in the Eurozone due to the inconclusive Italian elections, low consumer confidence at home, signs of still weak bank lending and businesses remaining reluctant to invest due to economic uncertainty, none of the main causes of weak growth have been resolved. The outlook for the rest of the year is therefore one of very modest economic growth at best with on-going, heightened risks of another slide back into contraction."
<u>March</u>	<u>Weather impacts</u>	<u>Economic impacts</u>
	<p>The month opened with a few days of unsettled weather, but by mid-month high pressure dominated and the country saw a welcome respite to the rain and wind that had defined the preceding winter season. However, dense - and in some places persistent - fog were a problem at times. Some fine and at times warm weather was enjoyed by many, heralding the first spell of more than one or two dry days together since early December. Often sunshine was plentiful, giving rise to some warm days, although nights remained chilly in places. Somewhat more unsettled weather returned later in the month.</p> <p>The temperature for the month overall was 1.2 °C above the 1981-2010 average. Warm sunny days led to daytime maximum temperatures 2.0 °C above average, and these were particularly high in the east, with Suffolk and Kent having their 2nd highest March maximum temperatures in a series from 1910. In contrast night time minimum temperatures were closer to average. Rainfall was 77% of average, and East Anglia had less than half of average. It was a sunny month everywhere, with 134% of average hours of bright sunshine. A maximum temperature of 20.9 °C was recorded at St James's Park (Greater London) and Santon Downham (Suffolk) on the 30th.</p> <p>Although there were spells of fine early spring weather, there were also incidences of dense fog during the month. This caused some travel disruption on roads, with a number of accidents reported across parts of the South West, particularly Somerset on 13th, and flights were delayed at airports across the country.</p>	<p>The UK economy is still growing strongly, but not at the pace seen in recent months, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) says.</p> <p>The group said its growth indicator for March showed the economy growing at its slowest rate in eight months. But the CBI said growth remains above average, as the recovery in the UK economy continues to do well. It added the outlook for the next three months was positive, with the service sector expected to boost GDP.</p> <p>The CBI based its findings on a survey of 622 manufacturing, retail and service businesses. It found the slowdown in output growth was largely due to the retail, business and consumer and professional services sectors. Growth pick up Anna Leach, CBI's head of economic analysis, said: "Although growth has slowed from record levels last month, it remains strong and firms are optimistic it will pick up again in the next quarter. "As this year progresses, we expect further increases in business and consumer confidence. Productivity and earnings should also start to recover. However, global developments continue to pose a risk to UK growth, not least the risk of renewed problems in the eurozone."</p> <p>Meanwhile, a survey of 8,737 small businesses carried out at the end of last year has indicated that Britain's small businesses are feeling increasingly confident. Two-thirds of the firms polled by the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) said they were planning to expand in the next 12 months. FSB members aged 35 or under also reported increased profits, with 43% saying they had seen growth in 2013.</p>

	<u>Weather impacts</u>	<u>Economic impacts</u>
<u>April</u>	<p>The cold dry weather of late March continued into the first few days of April. The month began chilly with some wintry showers before turning more unsettled with rain or showers, and strong winds between 14th and 18th. Following this, a somewhat drier, warmer and brighter period prevailed before finally turning cooler again with some heavy showers before the end of the month.</p> <p>Temperatures did return to near the seasonal average as the month progressed, as the persistent easterly winds finally gave way to winds from a westerly or southerly quarter around 11th. Temperatures rose as high as 23 °C in some eastern areas on 25th, but it then became rather chillier once again, especially at night with some late-season frosts occurring quite widely on 29th and 30th.</p> <p>The mean temperature was provisionally 0.9 °C below the 1981-2010 average, similar to that of April 2012. It was a very dry month with only 52% of average rainfall, and parts of the North Midlands to the east coast received less than 20% of average. The sunshine total was 108% of the long-term average, slightly brighter in parts of the east and duller in the south-west.</p> <p>Temperatures for April were below average everywhere. The provisional UK mean temperature was 6.3 °C, which is 1.1 °C below the 1981-2010 average, very similar to 2012 but otherwise the coldest April for the UK since 1989.</p> <p>The month was drier than average across most of England and Wales, with a band from Cheshire to Humberside receiving less than 20% of average. In contrast northern and western Scotland received higher than average rainfall for the month. The UK overall had 88% of average rainfall. There was 114% of the long-term average sunshine for the UK overall, with most of Scotland and eastern areas of England above average.</p>	<p>The UK economy returned to meagre - but better than forecast - growth in the first quarter of 2013, averting the prospect of a triple-dip recession.</p> <p>According to the first estimate of gross domestic product (GDP) by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported during the month there was overall growth of 0.3% in the period - driven by the service sector, although construction remained in the doldrums. A contraction in GDP would have given the UK two consecutive quarters of negative output and plunged the country back into recession, delivering a savage political blow to Chancellor George Osborne.</p> <p>GDP had shrunk by 0.3% in the final three months of 2012 but the new figures pointed to a recovery in services output, with the motor industry particularly strong.</p> <p>The ONS measured growth in the sector at 0.6%, driven by a 1.1% increase in the wholesale and retail distribution, hotels and restaurant trades sector. Industrial output was lifted by the biggest rise in the mining and quarrying sector since 2002 as some North Sea oil and gas platforms came back on line after repairs that had depressed production in the final quarter of 2012.</p> <p>The figures also showed that the impact of the long cold winter was not as bad as feared, with weather-hit trading on the high street offset by a boost in energy demand as households ramped up their heating.</p>

	<u>Weather impacts</u>	<u>Economic impacts</u>
<u>May</u>	<p>The cool theme which characterised spring continued into May and whilst the month began with a spell of fine weather, from 8th onwards it became much more unsettled with heavy rain and strong winds at times with temperatures somewhat below average for much of the month. Winds were often from a northerly direction, although there were a few warmer days in some areas.</p> <p>It was also unsettled at times, particularly in northern and western areas; the 14th was particularly wet over much of England and Wales. In between the unsettled spells there was some pleasant spring sunshine. Temperatures remained generally below average with some notably cold days. The last week became drier and brighter, but temperatures still struggled to reach seasonal-average values.</p> <p>The provisional mean temperature was 1.0 °C below the 1981-2010 average, the coldest May since 1996. Rainfall was well above average in the north-east and the Midlands, and England overall had 119% of average. The sunshine total was 99% of the long-term average, slightly brighter in parts of the south-west and duller in the north-west.</p> <p>There were unseasonably strong winds over a large part of central and southern England and Wales on the 9th May, widely gusting at 50 mph. South-west England and south Wales experienced heavy rain from the 14th to 15th May, with 40mm or more falling widely on 14th and some reports of localised flooding in Wales. On the morning of 15th, a few locations in Shropshire and Dartmoor briefly experienced lying snow. Winds gusted at 60-70 mph over exposed extremities of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Several thousand homes in Cornwall were without power overnight and there were reports of fallen trees.</p>	<p>According to the CBI's latest economic forecast published during the month, the UK economy will continue to grow throughout this year with GDP growth expected to pick up in 2014. But while recent economic data have been more promising, clear challenges remain both at home and abroad, the UK's leading business group, The CBI, warned.</p> <p>The CBI is forecasting GDP growth of 1% in 2013, unchanged from its previous forecast after official first quarter figures came in line with its expectations. In 2014, the CBI is expecting growth of 2%, with quarter-on-quarter growth to range between 0.5% and 0.6%. John Cridland, CBI Director-General, said <i>"The UK economy is moving from flat to growth. Although recent data suggests rising business confidence, the economic climate remains tough, hampering demand here and overseas. Meanwhile, consumers remain under pressure, as inflation continues to outstrip wage growth. Now the Government needs to pick up the baton and deliver on promises to get finance to firms, cut red tape and help drive up exports."</i></p> <p>The CBI is forecasting that unemployment will see a small rise in 2013 to 2.58 million before receding slightly to 2.51million in 2014. Inflation is expected to peak in the second quarter of 2013 (3.1%) before starting to fall steadily for the rest of the year though remaining above target throughout 2014 (2.5%).</p> <p>Household spending is expected to remain subdued with wage growth weak and unemployment expected to rise slightly. However, improving confidence, lower inflation and improving credit conditions should support a gradual improvement in household consumption, with growth rising from 1.3% this year to 1.8% in 2014.</p> <p>Stephen Gifford, CBI Director of Economics, added <i>"Our latest survey data suggests that the momentum shown in the first quarter will continue into the next. We continue to expect UK economic growth to strengthen and become more broad-based over this year and next. Global uncertainty has receded somewhat, setting the stage for a gradual improvement in trading conditions. However, while household incomes are expected to remain under pressure, improving credit conditions and confidence should maintain the momentum in the consumer recovery."</i></p>

	<u>Weather impacts</u>	<u>Economic impacts</u>
<u>June</u>	<p>June began settled and quite sunny in most areas with high pressure established over the UK, though temperatures barely exceeded their seasonal averages over England. After the 9th June it became rather more unsettled and cooler. A muggy and humid spell over the south for a time after mid-month made for locally very warm conditions in any sunshine. The latter part of the month was again mainly settled and fine, especially over England, but again barely warmer than the seasonal average. June overall was a rather cool month over England and Wales, especially towards the south-east, although western parts of Scotland and Northern Ireland were slightly warmer than average.</p> <p>Rainfall was mostly below normal except in Northern Ireland. Some western areas were rather sunny.</p> <p>The provisional UK mean temperature was 12.8 °C, which is 0.2 °C below the 1981-2010 average but warmer than the last two Junes. The month was rather drier than average across most of England, Wales and Scotland - with most areas receiving around a half to two-thirds of the normal amount of rainfall - but the south-east and East Anglia received only a third. Northern Ireland was slightly wetter than average. The UK overall received 63% of average rainfall. There was provisionally 178 hours of sunshine for the UK overall, 105% of the long-term average, with the sunniest areas being towards the western side of Wales and Scotland.</p> <p>A maximum temperature of 27.2 °C was recorded at Heathrow (Greater London) on the 30th. A minimum temperature of -1.1 °C was recorded at Tulloch Bridge (Highland) on the 1st. In the 24 hours ending at 0900 GMT on the 14th, 39.8 mm of rain fell at Ballypatrick Forest (County Antrim). A wind gust of 67 mph was recorded at Capel Curig (Gwynedd) on the 23rd.</p> <p>It was a quiet start to June with settled weather across much of the country. Localised flash flooding was reported in west Cornwall on the night of the 7th/8th when storms produced nearly 40 mm in 3 hours. There were unseasonably strong winds across parts of England and Wales on the 13th, with gusts over 50 mph in some exposed localities, and on the same day there were heavy downpours, locally large hail and some squally winds over eastern and north-east England. There were a few thunderstorms in some southern and eastern areas of England on 20th and 21st, after which quieter weather returned again.</p>	<p>New research from Which? shows that Britons are feeling more optimistic about the UK economy but continue to feel gloomy about their household finances, with worries about rising food, fuel and energy prices still high. Key findings from the group's July Consumer Insight Tracker are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More consumers (36%) now think the UK economy will get better in the next 12 months, compared to those (29%) who think it will get worse. • The proportion of consumers rating the economy as good is at its highest since the survey began – just over one in ten (13%) now rate the economy as good, compared to 6% in July 2012. • The proportion of consumers rating the economy as poor (59%) is at its lowest since the tracker began in July 2012. • Although the majority (59%) still rate the UK economy as poor, the proportion has dropped from 66% in June 2013 and 72% in July 2012. • Levels of concern over the cost of living remain high, with the top consumer worries remaining unchanged: fuel (81%); energy prices (79%) and food prices (73%). <p>Nearly a third of consumers (31%) are still finding it difficult or very difficult on their current household income.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One in five (20%) consumers still feel insecure about their job security. • More than 1 in 3 (36%) are now cutting back spending on essential household items (9.5 million households) compared to 25% in July 2012. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 in 4 (28%) have dipped into savings to cover July's spending (7.4 million households) compared to 21% in June and 21% in July 2012. • 1 in 5 (21%) have used an authorised overdraft facility in the last month (5.5 million households) compared to 16% last month and 17% in July 2012. • 1 in 7 (14%) have borrowed money from family or friends (3.7 million households) compared to 11% last month and 10% a year ago. <p>Which? executive director, Richard Lloyd, says: "The recent heat wave and the arrival of a royal baby may have contributed to the public mood but there is still no let up for the millions of squeezed households who are struggling to get by. Unless things improve we won't see the all important rise in consumer spending that is so vital to the UK's economic recovery."</p>

July

Weather impacts

Much of July was settled with high pressure established over the UK and with plenty of sunshine in most areas. As the month progressed there was an increasing tendency for high daytime temperatures, exceeding 28 °C somewhere in the UK on 19 consecutive days from 6th to 24th, with values exceeding 30 °C on several days. This was the UK's most notable summer heat wave since 2006. The UK overall had a rather dry month compared to normal, with nearly all of the month's rain falling during the last ten days, often as thundery outbreaks.

The provisional UK mean temperature was 17.0 °C, which is 1.9 °C above the 1981-2010 average, placing it at third warmest in a series from 1910 (exceeded only in 2006 and 1983). The month was drier than average overall, especially in parts of South West England, East Anglia and north-west Scotland. However, central areas from the Midlands to southern and eastern Scotland received near or above average rainfall. The UK overall received 82%, making this the driest July since 2006, in contrast to the recent run of wet Julys. There was provisionally 251 hours of sunshine for the UK overall, 145% of the long-term average, with the sunniest areas being towards the west. It was the third sunniest July in a series from 1929.

Very little rain fell over the UK during the first three weeks of the month. With dry ground and high temperatures, a number of wildfires were reported across southern England, including the London area. The prolonged heat led to numerous Heat-Health Watch warnings from 13th to 23rd, mainly across the South East. Later in the month, the weather broke down with a lot of showery activity, some of it thundery, giving some very large rainfall totals over localised areas.

Economic impacts

The UK economy is "on the mend" after figures showed it grew by 0.6% in the three months to June, said Chancellor George Osborne. Output grew in the construction, manufacturing, services and agriculture sectors according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). It said the figure meant the economy has recouped more than half the 7.2% of output lost in the 2008-09 recession. Labour's Ed Balls, said families were still suffering. Despite the relatively strong figure, analysts said the outlook for the rest of the year remained uncertain.

The 0.6% seasonally-adjusted growth rate was in line with market expectations, and was up from 0.3% growth in the previous quarter. "This isn't a figure that should be shouted from the rooftops by any means," said Richard Driver, currency market analyst at Caxton FX. "But given where we have been and where most other global economies are now in terms of economic growth, it is more than satisfactory. The challenge now is to maintain this pace of growth in the second half of the year and the prospects look highly uncertain in this regard."

It is the first estimate for growth during the second quarter of 2013, and is based on about 44% of actual data on economic activity. "These figures are better than forecast," said Mr Osborne. "Britain is holding its nerve, we are sticking to our plan, and the British economy is on the mend - but there is still a long way to go and I know things are still tough for families." Shadow chancellor Ed Balls welcomed the growth figure "after three wasted and damaging years of flat-lining", but warned that "families on middle and low incomes are still not seeing any recovery in their living standards" because wage rises were failing to keep up with increases in prices.

	<u>Weather impacts</u>	<u>Economic impacts</u>
<u>August</u>	<p>The month opened with some unsettled weather but a southerly feed of hot and humid air led to very high temperatures across South East England on the 1st, giving the highest temperatures of the year so far. Many areas received plenty of showery rain over the first few days of August with some persistent heavy rain and torrential downpours in Wales on the 4th. The rest of the month saw generally quieter weather with temperatures near average. Frontal systems brought rain at times, mainly to the north-west, but there was also plenty of fine, sunny weather, particularly in the south and east. The main exception was Saturday 24 August when 30-50 mm of rain fell across parts of eastern England, with torrential downpours causing flash flooding in Essex.</p> <p>The provisional UK mean temperature was 15.6 °C, which is 0.7 °C above the 1981-2010 average. The rainfall pattern was variable, with some parts of the UK notably dry for the month overall - for example southern England, parts of Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Norfolk, Northern Ireland and parts of southern and eastern Scotland. Other areas were wetter than average - for example parts of the Pennines, Essex, west Cornwall and South Wales. The UK overall received 80%, making this the driest August since 2003.</p> <p>Temperatures on 1st August reached 31 to 32 °C across much of central and south-east England, and it was hotter than during the recent July heat wave. Heathrow reached 34.1 °C and many stations recorded their highest temperature of the year. However, the weather was very different in the far north and west with cloud and rain. Localised torrential downpours occurred at times through the month. Flash flooding from heavy rainfall in Cornwall in early August made some roads impassable, and damaged treatment rooms at the Newquay Community Hospital. In south Essex flash flooding on the 24th resulted in rainwater and sewage inundating hundreds of properties and causing significant disruption in the region; 47.6 mm was recorded at Shoeburyness in a 4 hour period in the early afternoon. This affected local seaside businesses, falling as it did over the bank holiday weekend.</p>	<p>Chancellor George Osborne has claimed victory for the Government's economic 'Plan A', stating that the UK economy is 'turning a corner'. Citing 'tentative signs of a balanced, broad based and sustainable recovery', Mr Osborne said that recent economic data proves the Government's economic plan is the 'right response to Britain's macroeconomic imbalances'.</p> <p>Recent statistics suggesting that the economy grew by 0.7% in the second quarter were followed by an upward revision of the UK economic forecast by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Mr Osborne said, 'The economic collapse was even worse than we thought. Repairing it will take even longer than we hoped. But we held our nerve when many told us to abandon our plan. And as a result, thanks to the efforts and sacrifices of the British people, Britain is turning a corner'.</p> <p>Despite acknowledging that 'many risks remain', the Chancellor insisted that the Government's plan is working, asserting, 'Those in favour of a Plan B have lost the argument'.</p> <p>The CBI acknowledged that the economy is 'gathering some momentum', but has urged the Government to couple its deficit reduction plan with an 'unrelenting focus on growth-boosting measures like infrastructure projects', in order for the economic upturn to continue.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Business Secretary Vince Cable cautioned the Chancellor against complacency, warning that ministers 'can't rest on [their] laurels', and argued that whilst the 'beginnings of a recovery story' were visible, this economic recovery would not be meaningful until there was an increase in sustained business investment.</p>

September

Weather impacts

The month opened with some fine, warm, sunny weather, but the second week was unsettled and cooler. After a brief stormy period mid-month, the second half was quieter and more typical of autumn.

The provisional UK mean temperature was 12.8 °C, which is 0.1 °C above the 1981-2010 average. The rainfall pattern was variable, though with many parts of the UK rather dry for the month overall - most notably Lincolnshire and parts of eastern Scotland. The UK overall received 73% of the average rainfall amount for the month. There was provisionally 93% of the long-term average hours of bright sunshine, with eastern and north-eastern areas generally brightest and southern and western areas duller.

This was generally a rather quiet month, with a few brief exceptions. Heavy rain affected localised parts of south-east Scotland on the 6th. More widespread heavy rain and strong winds affected some areas around the 14th to 16th, although any impacts were generally limited. Slack pressure gradients and light winds allowed fog to form in some parts of the south-east on the final few nights and mornings of the month.

Economic impacts

The UK economic output rose by 0.8% between July and September, official GDP figures show. The Office for National Statistics said there had been a "fairly strong" performance across all sectors. The data builds on a 0.7% GDP rise in the April-June period and is the best quarterly performance since 2010. Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne tweeted: "This shows that Britain's hard work is paying off & the country is on the path to prosperity." Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg said the figures "show that we are firmly on the road to economic recovery".

The ONS data for construction was up 2.5% over the quarter, the second successive quarter of growth after a volatile performance over the past year. The BBC's chief economics correspondent, Hugh Pym, said: "This could signal that a recovery in that sector is really under way."

House-builders have been buoyed by the Government's Help to Buy scheme, which recently launched a new phase offering mortgage guarantees. The ONS said that production grew by 0.5%, though this remains 12.8% off its 2008 level, while within this, manufacturing improved 0.9% in the third quarter. The services sector, which represents three-quarters of economic output, grew by 0.7%. Output from services is now 0.4% above its pre-crisis peak in the first quarter of 2008.

Mr Osborne told the BBC: "It shows that we are on the path to prosperity. Lots of risks remain, so we have to stick with the economic plan that has got us this far. "What's encouraging about these figures is that it's not just services that are growing. Construction is growing and manufacturing is growing." Shadow chancellor Ed Balls said: "After three damaging years of flatlining, it's both welcome and long overdue that our economy is growing again. "But for millions of people across the country still seeing prices rising faster than their wages, this is no recovery at all." Despite the further evidence that recovery is gaining hold, some economists remain cautious. The Institute of Directors' chief economist Graeme Leach said: "The outlook looks better than at any time since the onset of the financial crisis. Indeed, our members have more confidence in the economy than at any time since 2008.

	<u>Weather impacts</u>	<u>Economic impacts</u>
<u>October</u>	<p>October was an unsettled month, opening with showers and spells of rain, but also mild in most areas. The second week saw cooler, drier weather for many parts, but from mid-month it again became unsettled, albeit remaining mild. A vigorous storm brought strong winds and heavy rain to southern parts of England and Wales early on the 28th, causing widespread damage and disruption.</p> <p>The provisional UK mean temperature was 11.2 °C, which is 1.7 °C above the 1981-2010 average. The Midlands, the Thames Estuary area and parts of south-west England and Northern Ireland were wetter than average, while a few places in northern Scotland were drier than average.</p> <p>Weather impacts</p> <p>Spells of heavy rain throughout the month caused localised flooding and other impacts. On the 2nd and 3rd flooding affected South Wales, Cornwall and Northern Ireland, while the rain caused a landslip that closed the A83 in Argyll. Flash flooding occurred in Cardiff on the 19th. A tornado was reported to have caused damage to homes and property on Hayling Island (Hampshire) on the 20th. Heavy rain affected parts of Pembrokeshire and Powys on the 21st, then Snowdonia on the 22nd, where a landslip closed the A498. Central and southern Scotland also experienced heavy rain and flooding on the 22nd.</p> <p>A vigorous autumn storm affected southern UK early on the 28th with widespread impacts, mostly due to damaging gusts of wind, particularly in south-east England. Four people were killed, in Kent, Watford and west London. Over 600,000 homes were left without power and there was severe travel disruption as train services were suspended, flights were reduced, fallen trees and standing water blocked roads and ferry services were cancelled.</p>	<p>Britain's economy is growing at its fastest rate in more than three years after a 0.8% increase in national output in the quarter to September.</p> <p>The first stab at estimating the state of the economy from the Office for National Statistics found that activity had increased across the board with production, construction, services and agriculture all registering growth. Despite the expansion – the second strong quarterly performance in a row – the level of gross domestic product remains 2.5% lower than it was when Britain's deepest post-war recession began at the start of 2008.</p> <p>The ONS said national output had grown by 1.5% between the third quarter of 2012, when the economy was boosted by the London Olympics and Paralympics, and the third quarter of 2013. Output increased by 1.4% in agriculture, 0.5% in production, 2.5% in construction and 0.7% in services. The data is likely to be revised as more detailed information about the economy becomes available.</p> <p>The chancellor, George Osborne, said: "This shows that Britain's hard work is paying off and the country is on the path to prosperity." The GDP figures were in line with City predictions and were the strongest performance since the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition came to power in the spring of 2010. Ministers believe the growth figures will enable them to seize the political initiative over the coming months, while Labour will insist that increased activity has not been accompanied by higher living standards.</p> <p>Activity in the service sector, which makes up more than 75% of the economy, is now above its pre-recession peak, but output in construction and production remain more than 12% lower.</p>

	<u>Weather impacts</u>	<u>Economic impacts</u>
<u>November</u>	<p>The month opened with some generally unsettled and wet weather. The westerly weather type meant there were relatively few dry days, but also few frosts. From mid-month there was a shift to more settled, but colder weather with plenty of sunshine as high pressure systems dominated. The country experienced the first widespread frosts and some early-season snowfalls in the north.</p> <p>The provisional UK mean temperature was 5.5 °C, which is 0.7 °C below the 1981-2010 average. The UK received 76% of long-term average rainfall making this provisionally the driest November since 2004; parts of eastern Scotland, Northern Ireland, northern England and Anglesey receiving less than half the average rainfall. Most of the country enjoyed a relatively sunny month, particularly parts of northern England and eastern Scotland. For Scotland overall, this was provisionally the sunniest November in a series from 1929.</p> <p>A maximum temperature of 16.5 °C was recorded at Exeter Airport (Devon) on the 6th.</p> <p>On 2nd November there were strong winds across parts of south and west Wales with gusts of 70 to 80 mph, and a peak recorded gust at Mumbles Head (West Glamorgan) of 89 mph. These caused tree damage, and thousands of homes and businesses lost power.</p> <p>The first widespread frosts occurred in the second half of the month, with some snow across higher ground in Scotland and northern parts of England and Wales.</p>	<p>Despite what's been going on elsewhere, the growth prospects for the UK have been improving steadily during 2013. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Paris is the latest body to note that activity will be stronger in 2014 than previously envisaged. Growth of 2.4% next year, if achieved, would be the strongest since 2007.</p> <p>The improvement in the UK outlook is entirely due to a pick-up in the domestic economy, fostered by the Bank of England's cheap money policy, the Help to Buy boost to the housing market, the willingness of consumers to run down their savings to fund spending, and a slowdown in austerity to reflect weaker growth over the last couple of years. If anything, events in the rest of the global economy are hindering rather than helping the UK.</p> <p>The OECD has concerns about policy gridlock in Washington, about the impact on emerging economies of the gradual withdrawal of the Federal Reserve's bond-buying stimulus programme, and of the threat that the euro area could become the new Japan, locked into a vortex of deflation and rocketing public debt. Indeed, the strongest words in the thinktank's half-yearly snapshot of the global economy are reserved for European policymakers. The OECD calls on Germany to do more to help the struggling members of the euro area to grow faster by liberalising its services sector. Even more provocatively, the OECD says the European Central Bank should consider supplementing low interest rates with its own version of quantitative easing – buying bonds to drive down long-term interest rates.</p> <p>"Risks of deflation may be slowly increasing," says OECD chief economist Pier Carlo Padoan. "The ECB must be very careful and be prepared to use even non-conventional measures to beat any risk of deflation becoming permanent."</p>

	<u>Weather impacts</u>	<u>Economic impacts</u>
<u>December</u>	<p>The first few days of December were mostly fine over England and Wales, but rather less so for Scotland and Northern Ireland. A major winter storm on 5th brought strong winds to Scotland with a storm-surge mainly affecting the east coast. Quieter weather resumed until mid-month, with some notably high temperatures recorded in Scotland, after which high pressure gave way and the weather became increasingly unsettled and stormy. A succession of deep Atlantic low pressure systems brought heavy rain and very strong winds for most areas, with frequent gusts of 60 to 70 mph. This was the windiest December in records from 1969 and one of the windiest calendar months since January 1993. On Christmas Eve a mean-sea-level pressure of 936 hPa was recorded at Stornoway (Western Isles), the lowest such value at a UK land station for many years.</p> <p>The UK mean temperature was 5.7 °C, which is 1.8 °C above the 1981-2010 average, provisionally the warmest December since 1988. The UK overall received 154% of average rainfall. Two broad areas, one over southern and south-east England and the other extending from the Lake District to Highland Scotland, were much wetter than average with many places receiving twice the normal rainfall for the month; Scotland had its wettest December in a series from 1910. However, some parts of eastern England were drier than average. There was provisionally 108% of the long-term average hours of bright sunshine, with western areas rather dull but central and eastern England much sunnier than average.</p> <p>Most weather impacts during the month were related to strong winds, heavy rain and associated flooding. However, in more settled interludes, saturated ground allowed fog to form, with an increased risk of icy conditions. Frontal systems following such colder spells also brought significant snowfalls to Scotland's mountains and transient snow to lower levels.</p> <p>The first major storm of the month was associated with a low pressure centre that crossed northern Scotland on the 5th. This brought strong winds and heavy rain to much of the UK. There was flooding and widespread transport disruption with Scotland's rail network shut down, two fatalities and many thousands of homes without power. Coastal flooding damaged properties and led to evacuations in north Wales, while high tides coincided with the strong winds to create a highly damaging</p>	<p>The UK economy will finally surpass its pre-recession peak next year, says the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC). The UK's economic output peaked in the first quarter of 2008. The BCC says it expects the economy to surpass that level in the second half of 2014. It also says that the UK's GDP is now set to grow by 2.7% in 2014, an upgrade from a previous prediction of 2.2%. BCC head John Longworth welcomed the improvement but warned that longer-term problems were "still looming". Mr Longworth said: "It is really great that next year the UK economy is finally expected to bounce back from the deepest recession in modern times." But he added: "As household consumption slows in the medium term, we have to find ways of boosting business investment and exports, as rebalancing our economy is critical to our long-term economic future. "If we make important decisions to fix the long-term structural failure in business finance, continue to deliver a major infrastructure upgrade and do more to support exports, it is possible to achieve not just a good recovery, but a truly great and sustainable economy."</p> <p>As well as increasing its growth forecast for 2014, the BCC also slightly raised its forecast for this year, from 1.3% to 1.4%. However, it lowered its 2015 prediction from 2.5% to 2.4%, saying that high personal debt levels would reduce households' consumption, which accounts for two-thirds of UK GDP. The BCC also revised its view on when the UK's jobless rate might fall to 7%, a level seen by the Bank of England as a necessary condition for future interest rate rises. "We forecast that the 7% unemployment rate threshold will be reached in [the third quarter of] 2015, one quarter earlier than we predicted in August. However, the [Monetary Policy Committee's] suggestion that there is a 40% probability that this could be reached by the end of 2014 is too ambitious in our view," the BCC said. It said that as a result, it expected interest rates to rise from their current historic low of 0.5% in the last quarter of 2015. An initial increase to 0.75% would be followed by a further rise to 1% in the first quarter of 2016.</p>

storm surge for North Sea coasts. Thousands of homes were evacuated and several cliff-top properties collapsed into the sea due to coastal erosion.

Severe gales and heavy rain affected Scotland again on 14th and 15th, causing further flooding and power cuts, and a major storm on 18th to 19th again caused disruption to Scotland and Northern Ireland with strong winds and flooding. A cold icy start to the 20th produced difficult travel conditions across Wales, exacerbated by some snowfall as a frontal system arrived from the Atlantic.

Another deep Atlantic low pressure system brought strong winds and heavy rain to much of the UK from 23rd to 24th December, bringing 60 to 70 mm of rain to the high ground of southern England. Flooding affected parts of Dorset and Surrey, with power cuts for over 10,000 homes continuing through the Christmas period.

There was further stormy weather with heavy rain and strong winds on 26th to 27th and again on 29th to 30th. Transport disruption continued with flooded railways and fallen trees blocking roads in Wales, while Dumfries and Galloway experienced severe flooding as the River Nith burst its banks. Continuing stormy weather and concerns for further flooding extended into the New Year period.

Data sources:

Met Office monthly summary reports

BBC News

The Guardian

ONS