

RIVER CLUN MONITORING GROUP

Fifty Years of Rain at Woodside: What the Numbers Show

For over fifty years, the daily rainfall has been measured at Woodside for the Met Office and the Environment Agency. That unbroken record, from 1973 to today, lets us ask a question many of us wonder about at the allotment or on the riverbank: is our weather actually changing, or does it just feel that way?

The answer, cautiously, is yes — but not quite how you might expect.

Rainfall is increasing – River Clun catchment 1973-2025

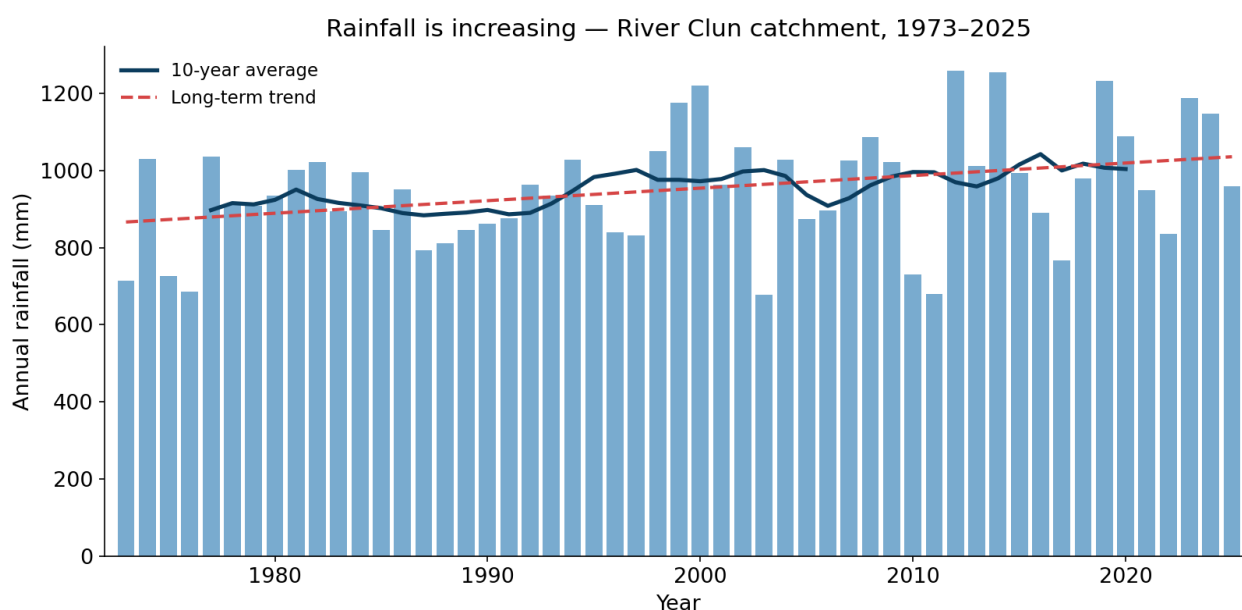


Figure 1: Total annual rainfall at Woodside, 1973–2025.

Total annual rainfall has risen steadily since the 1970s, by around 3mm a year on average — enough to add up to a real, statistically significant trend across the whole 53-year record. It isn't dramatic year to year (some years are wet, some are dry, as anyone who gardens knows), but the underlying direction is up.

Autumn Rainfall is increasing - River Clun catchment 1973-2025

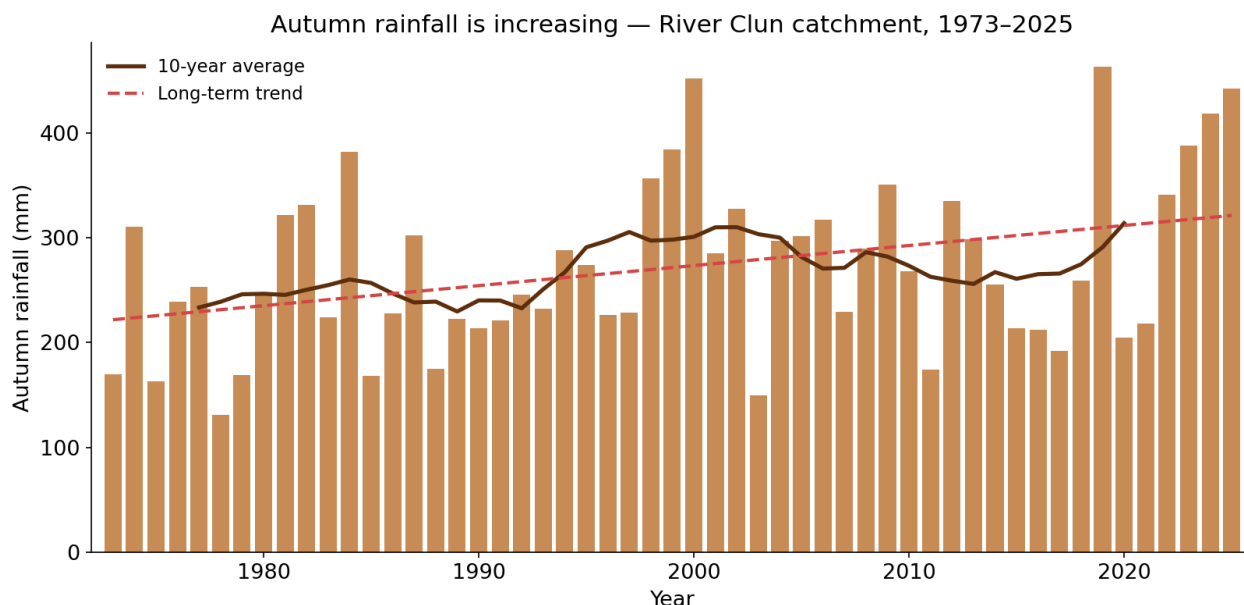


Figure 2: Autumn (September–November) rainfall at Woodside, 1973–2025.

If you look season by season the story sharpens. Of the four seasons, only autumn shows a clear, sustained increase — roughly 40% more rain than in the 1970s. Winter, spring and summer have all stayed broadly constant over the same period.

Heavy autumn downpours are becoming more frequent

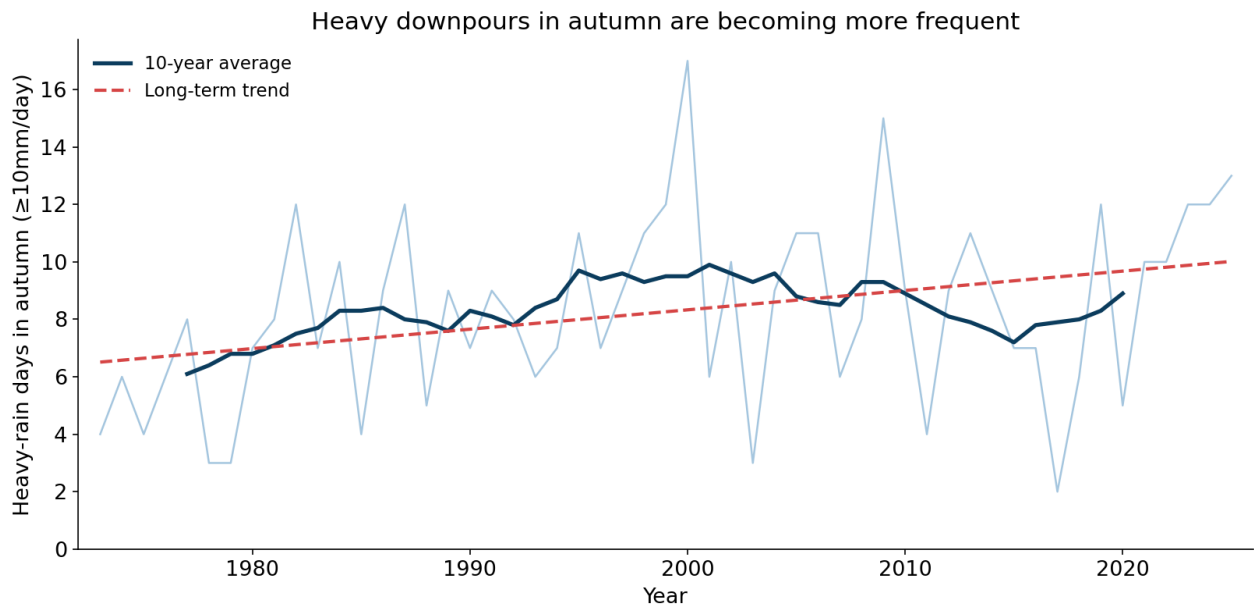


Figure 3: Autumn days with 10mm or more of rain, 1973–2025.

More strikingly, that extra autumn rain is not spread evenly across ordinary drizzly days. It is arriving as heavy downpours — days with 10mm or more of rain in 24 hours. The number of such days each autumn has climbed from around six a year in the 1970s to around ten today.

Why does this matter for the river? Heavy rain falling on already-saturated autumn ground runs off quickly rather than soaking in, carrying sediment and nutrients from fields and gardens straight into the Clun and its tributaries — often in a concentrated pulse at the start of a storm. It is exactly this kind of event that the River Clun Monitoring Group's monthly water testing is designed to catch.

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