Why was last winter so wet and windy?

The south of England was hit by storm after storm last winter. What was the cause of this extreme weather?

The winter of 2013–14 was the wettest in England and Wales since records began in 1766. Not only was it very wet, but it was also the windiest winter for 28 years. The Met Office has reported that at least 12 major storms (deep depressions) affected the UK between 5 December 2013 and 15 February 2014. The satellite image shows one of these storms over the UK on 12 February. The characteristic swirl of cloud around the centre of the depression can clearly be seen on the photograph. No single storm over this period was exceptional in its severity, but what was remarkable was the sheer frequency of the storms.

Further reading

Met Office ‘Winter storms, January to February 2014’ www.tinyurl.com/kjvypk
BBC News ‘10 key moments of the UK winter storms’ 17 February 2014
www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk/26170904
For a detailed case study of the impact of the storms on Chesil Cove, Dorset, read the article by Alan Holiday on pp. 38–41 of this issue.