

# UNISON

## *Influencers 2026*

### SCOTTISH WATER

UNISON commissioned [research](#) into Scottish Water from academics at Glasgow and Newcastle University, which found:

Scottish Water is undergoing “privatisation by stealth”: shifting towards a market-driven model increasingly indistinguishable from privatised utilities in England. This includes growing outsourcing, weakened accountability and the sidelining of the workforce.

Around half of the workforce delivering services are now contractors, creating a two-tier workforce and weakening collective bargaining and union voice.

Industrial relations have deteriorated, with failures in consultation, reduced facilities time and barriers to effective union representation.

A £5–£9 billion procurement programme risks locking in long-term outsourcing with limited parliamentary scrutiny, shaping Scotland’s water system for decades.

Customer bills rose by 8.8%, while CEO pay increased by 28%. Senior executives earn more than the First Minister – while workers face pay restraint.

#### **UNISON is calling for:**

- A wide-ranging independent inquiry into governance, outsourcing and industrial relations, with the current procurement process paused to allow proper democratic scrutiny.
- Full transparency on links between senior managers, contractors and regulators, including publication of conflicts of interest and career movements.
- An end to anti-union practices. Collective bargaining must be strengthened and worker voice embedded in decision-making at all levels.
- A reset to public service values, including bringing executive pay in line with the wider public sector and reversing the creeping privatisation of Scotland’s water service.

You can read the Sunday Herald front page article [here](#)

Follow our campaign *Public services at the heart of a fairer Scotland* [here](#)

**Public services:  
the heart of a fairer  
Scotland**

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