

**eBRIEF**

For Members of the Scottish Parliament

**UNISON**  
Scotland

## **Scottish Water – privatisation by stealth and union busting**

Invite to all MSPs to hear directly about the crisis in Scottish Water from Scottish Water staff & unions:

### **Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> Nov Rm MG.03**

Briefing for MSPs 1 pm - 2 pm

Drop in for MSPs 2 pm - 4 pm

This week all three unions at Scottish Water – UNISON, Unite & the GMB will be [going on strike](#). This will mean engineers and treatment operatives, staff in pumping stations and depots downing tools. Formally the dispute is around an attempt to impose a new pay and grading structure on staff, but the background is a long campaign of privatisation by stealth and attempts at union busting on the part of Scottish Water management.

Scottish Water is being hollowed out. Formally this is the jewel in the crown of Scotland's public services. The reality on, and under, the ground is more and more of its operations are being handed over to private operators, by a management whose behaviour and attitudes are identical to the executives of privatised English companies.

The employed workforce is being run down and underutilised while work is transferred – at increased cost – to private contractors. This is privatisation by stealth – technically Scottish Water will remain publicly owned but in reality becomes a resource from which profits can be extracted. To facilitate this management have conducted a long campaign of ignoring collective agreements and demonstrated a routine hostility to the recognised trade unions.

Despite clear evidence that in house working is both cheaper and carried out to a higher standard than contracted out work Scottish Water management are running down in house capacity

This has reached levels of absurdity where in the past few months rather than being out clearing choked drains, dealing with bursts etc – Scottish Water staff

have been kept in the depot and (significantly more expensive) contractors are being used in preference.

It is revealing about the prevailing attitudes at the senior level of Scottish Water that the comparisons they use for their own salaries and [bonuses](#) are the dysfunctional English private water companies. The comparator organisations for staff however are McDonald's, Wetherspoons and Amazon

Scottish Water is the property of the Scottish people – not the plaything of a management looking to enrich their cronies. The Scottish Government can't stand aside from this.

Scottish Water are tying their cost of living pay offer to a new pay and grading structure. There have been no negotiations with the trade unions about that new pay and grading structure. In fact Scottish Water bosses have been withholding information from the trade unions.

Scottish Water are:

- Betraying the principles set out in the Fair Work Convention to give workers an effective voice.
- Failing to comply with the Scottish Government Pay Strategy around negotiating a pay offer.
- Ignoring their obligations under the recognition agreement that they have with the three unions.
- Leaving their workers without a pay rise in this time of high inflation

UNISON and the other unions want to negotiate a new pay and grading structure with Scottish Water, but this is a complex process that relies on accurate data. It is not going to be resolved quickly.

The key workers at Scottish Water need their overdue cost of living pay rise now; Scottish Water management need to realise they are there to hold an asset in trust for the nation – not drive up the share price of their favoured businesses, and the Scottish Government need to intervene to resolve the crisis in our greatest public asset.

For further information please contact

Emma Phillips: UNISON Regional Organiser 07841901890  
[E.Phillips@UNISON.co.uk](mailto:E.Phillips@UNISON.co.uk)