

The latest news and announcements from Derbyshire UNISON

Council bailout money

UNISON is calling on the UK water regulator Ofwat and the UK government to stop water companies from increasing bills.



UNISON calls on water regulator to protect customers and nature

The union says that instead, there should be a focus on legislation to make companies - not the public - pay to restore the waterways to good health and protect jobs in the industry.

The water industry has hit the headlines again this week because of Ofwat's plans to consult on banning bonuses for the bosses of water companies that have been found to have harmed the environment.

But as well as failing the environment, companies are failing customers and workers as well, claims UNISON, with several companies proposing to increase bills to fund necessary repairs and

investment in water infrastructure. Last year saw water companies consistently hitting headlines for negative reasons, including financial mismanagement, illegal discharge of sewage into waterways and leaving customers without running water - much of which can be put down to a lack of investment in infrastructure. Yet according to analysis by the Labour Party, water company bosses have received over £25m

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in bonuses and incentives since the last general election. The analysis found that nine water chief executives were paid £10m in bonuses, £14m in incentives and £603,580 in benefits since 2019.

In addition, in 2023, senior executives from five of the 11 water companies that deal with sewage took bonuses. During this time, the water industry saw below-inflation pay settlements, recruitment freezes, job losses and customers facing the prospect of an increase in water bills just as households are struggling from the cost-of-living scandal.

UNISON national secretary Donna Rowe-Merriman said:

“It’s obvious that the water companies in England are regional monopolies - and this model is not working for consumers or the environment.

“For years, profits in the water industry have landed in shareholder and executive pockets, and now, when infrastructure investment can’t be ignored any longer, they want customers and workers to pay the price.

“Privatising the profits and nationalising the cost is not a sustainable way to run any industry. Public ownership of the water industry is desperately needed so that the profits of this national asset benefit UK citizens and not just a small group of shareholders.”