Funding the Future

Who knows whether our drinking water is safe?

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As the [Guardian reported](#) on Saturday:

The safety of tap water in the UK could be at risk because water companies are unable to use products to clean it, industry insiders have said, as all the laboratories that test and certify the chemicals have shut down.

People in the industry have called it a "Brexit problem" because EU countries will share laboratory capacity from 2026, meaning that if the UK was still in the EU, water companies would be able to use products that passed tests on the continent.

But UK rules mean products cannot be tested abroad; they have to be tested in the country in a certified lab, of which there are now none.

I am astonished that this appears to have had little news coverage because what it means is that UK water might well be unsafe, and there is no one to warn us about it.

The risk is obvious. The shit that we know is in rivers might now be in our drinking water, and we aren't being told.

This is, of course, massively helpful to private water companies, who will claim all this is beyond their control and that there is nothing they can do about it.

But then, we should not have private water companies. Water is too important for markets to be involved in its delivery.

And we should have public testing agencies. The fault here lies with neoliberal politicians, and most especially the Tories under which this system collapsed.

Meanwhile, sales of bottled water will rise. GDP will grow. But there will be no net gain to society, and for many, there will just be increased risk, or sickness.

When will we realise that markets are no substitute for good governance driven by proper governments when it comes to the delivery of core services?