

Water & Wastewater 2025 Mid Year Update

Civils

As we progress through 2025, the water civils market remains steady, though AMP8 delivery has yet to fully gain momentum. The pace of mobilisation has been slower than expected, which has had a stabilising effect on salary levels and hiring activity.

Salaries have shown little movement from 2024 benchmarks. Permanent Site Manager positions continue to command salaries in the region of £45,000 to £65,000, depending on experience and regional demand. Contract day rates also remain consistent, with typical rates for Site Managers ranging from £400 to £500 per day, influenced by IR35 status.

Caution persists among employers, with many frameworks still in early mobilisation stages. The focus remains on retaining key staff and preparing for the transition into full delivery. While recruitment is ongoing, it is measured and typically tied to specific project timelines and pre-delivery planning.

One consistent theme remains: the shortage of experienced civils professionals across the water sector. Candidates with expertise in water treatment and pipeline infrastructure continue to be in high demand, and this shortage is expected to persist as projects progress further into AMP8 delivery.

Consultancy

The water consultancy market is showing gradual growth in design-focused permanent roles, though a gap remains between candidate salary expectations and client willingness to meet them. This disconnect, driven by a shortage of experienced engineers and the anticipation of increased demand through AMP8, is creating tension within the hiring market.

Major consultancies are beginning to recognise that businesses from outside the traditional water sector are preparing to enter the market. This shift is enhancing the value of water-specific experience, positioning engineers with sector knowledge as particularly sought after.

Continued overleaf

Water & Wastewater

Project management roles have seen a dip in demand during the early part of the year. However, this is expected to reverse as AMP8 delivery ramps up, with contractors and consultants set to be awarded significant tranches of work over the next 6 to 12 months. For now, salaries in this area remain static.

There has also been a noticeable rise in contractor expectations, particularly among highly experienced design professionals. Engineers with over 10 years of experience are increasingly aware of their value and are anticipating higher remuneration as AMP8 scales. In response, some businesses are beginning to offer one-off bonuses and retainer arrangements to secure and retain key talent.

M&E

As anticipated in our 2025 outlook, the first half of the year has brought limited movement across the Water M&E market. Many contractors are actively seeking new opportunities due to a slowdown in work and the conclusion of existing contracts, resulting in increased candidate availability.

However, signs of change are beginning to emerge. There is a noticeable ramp-up in design activity, with consultancies and contractors initiating recruitment drives across the UK. As demand for design talent grows, candidates are expected to gain more leverage in salary negotiations, particularly those with proven AMP experience.

While the market remains relatively flat at present, we are approaching a tipping point. Once full-scale AMP8 delivery begins, the sector is expected to experience a sharp uplift in activity, and with it, a significant shift in salary levels. For now, conditions remain similar to those seen at the start of the year, but momentum is building for a busier and more competitive second half.

