# Aberdeen oil workers face a cliff edge as job losses accelerate in energy transition



Oil and gas workers in Aberdeen are expressing profound concern over their job security amid a shifting economic landscape driven by the transition to renewable energy. This sentiment emerged during discussions with Scotland’s Just Transition Commission, which recently warned that the region risks an "unjust transition" as it pivots away from fossil fuels. Workers have reported feeling a "cliff edge" of job losses rather than a gradual transition, with many voicing uncertainty about their futures in an industry that is already witnessing significant skill loss.

In recent years, approximately 2,000 skilled jobs have vanished from the Scottish economy as the sector grapples with the evolving energy landscape. One employee highlighted that the redundancy trends are ongoing, stating, “It’s happening now. We’re seeing redundancies on a big scale.” The underlying fears are compounded by a lack of government and industry-led transition strategy; many feel that the necessary plans to retain jobs and support workers through this transition are conspicuously absent.

Moreover, a report indicates that 81% of offshore oil and gas workers are contemplating leaving the industry, reflecting pervasive job security concerns and low morale. Alarmingly, only 9% of those surveyed had even heard of a "just transition," indicating a significant gap in awareness and communication regarding the implications of the energy shift. This disconnect could exacerbate the already critical situation, as many workers remain sceptical about their place in a future dominated by renewables.

The commission's findings underscore the urgency for a coordinated approach involving businesses, trade unions, and policymakers to establish a viable framework for the transition. This is particularly crucial given that a substantial skills gap threatens the UK's ambitious climate targets. The energy sector requires an injection of 10,000 new skilled workers every year until 2030, which could be filled by individuals transitioning from the declining oil and gas industry. However, differing training standards and a lack of clear pathways to new roles hinder this potential shift.

As part of the response to these challenges, the commission called for a "clear plan" to cultivate a domestic supply chain and manufacturing base for renewable technologies, such as offshore wind, and carbon capture and storage. This initiative would not only bolster the requisite skilled workforce but also mitigate the anticipated job losses in the fossil fuel sector. Concurrently, recent projections warn that up to 60,000 jobs could disappear from the North Sea oil and gas industry by 2030, exacerbated by natural resource depletion and political pressures.

Scottish Government ministers, including Gillian Martin, have responded to the report, acknowledging the centrality of workers in achieving a fair transition to net zero. They commend the need for a credible training strategy not just supporting current skills but also equipping workers with necessary competencies for the renewable energy landscape. On the other hand, the UK Government has pledged rapid action to create quality jobs, unveiling initiatives like Great British Energy, which promises substantial investments in supply chains intended to develop a clean energy future.

However, these assurances may not fully alleviate the widespread fears among workers. Many are apprehensive that the pace of change will predominately lead to job losses at home while the UK’s reliance on "dirtier" imported oil and gas continues unbridled. As one worker remarked, “We are in a critical window. Mess up the next five years and we’re really in trouble.”

As Aberdeen faces the prospect of economic upheaval, with nearly 18,000 jobs lost since 2010, the call for proactive measures to diversify the region's economy has become more pressing. Economic analysts urge policymakers to implement strategic investments to cushion the impact of impending job losses and facilitate a smoother transition toward sustainable energy solutions.

The confluence of these challenges presents a pivotal moment for Aberdeen’s oil workers. The shift toward a cleaner energy future is not only an environmental imperative but also a critical juncture for the workers whose livelihoods depend on a well-managed transition. Without a cohesive approach that prioritises workers’ concerns alongside energy goals, the route to net zero could risk leaving behind those who have powered the region’s economy for decades.

### Reference Map

1. Lead article on Aberdeen oil workers’ job fears.
2. Skills gap in the UK's energy sector.
3. Survey on oil and gas workers' willingness to leave the industry.
4. Barriers to the energy transition as identified by a worker survey.
5. Predictions of job losses in the North Sea sector.
6. Economic challenges in Aberdeen related to job losses since 2010.
7. Overview of the changing landscape for Aberdeen's oil workers amid the transition to clean energy.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/politics/scottish-politics/6762343/aberdeen-oil-workers-jobs-fears/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/how-skills-gap-threatens-blow-uks-energy-transition-off-course-2024-10-31/> - This article discusses the significant skills gap in the UK's energy sector, particularly in offshore wind, which threatens the country's ambitious decarbonization targets. It highlights the need for 10,000 new skilled workers annually by 2030 and suggests that workers from the declining oil and gas sector could fill this gap. Initiatives like an energy skills passport are underway, but challenges remain due to differing training standards. The article emphasizes the necessity for collaborative efforts among industry, government, and educational institutions to address these workforce issues and ensure a successful energy transition.
3. <https://foe.scot/press-release/81-offshore-oil-gas-workers-leaving-industry/> - A major survey reveals that 81% of offshore oil and gas workers would consider leaving the industry. The study highlights concerns over job security, low morale, and fears that their communities may become economically depressed. Additionally, 91% of workers have never heard of a 'just transition,' indicating a lack of awareness about the implications of the energy transition. The report urges the government to consult with oil and gas workers in the UK's shift to renewable energy and emphasizes the need for a managed transition to protect workers and communities.
4. <https://www.energyvoice.com/oilandgas/north-sea/487282/offshore-worker-report-claims-culture-of-fear-as-barrier-to-north-sea-transition/> - A report surveying over 1,000 offshore workers identifies 'low morale' and a 'culture of fear' as significant barriers to the energy transition. Workers express concerns about job security and the lack of a clear plan for transitioning to renewable energy. The report calls for a managed phase-out of oil and gas production, with workers involved in policy-making to ensure a just transition. It also recommends the creation of offshore training passports and public ownership of energy assets to support workers during the transition.
5. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2023/12/28/risk-60000-north-sea-job-losses-end-decade/> - This article discusses the looming job losses in the UK's North Sea oil and gas industry, predicting that up to 60,000 jobs could be lost by 2030. The decline is attributed to the natural depletion of oil fields and political factors such as windfall taxes and environmental protests. The article highlights the need for a managed transition to renewable energy to mitigate the economic impact on workers and communities. It also emphasizes the importance of planning for decommissioning and the potential for job creation in the renewable sector.
6. <https://aberdeenbusinessnews.co.uk/agcc-urges-action-as-report-shows-18000-jobs-lost-in-aberdeen-since-2010/> - Economic analysts forecast that Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire will continue to face challenges, with the city experiencing a loss of nearly 18,000 jobs since 2010. The report highlights the impact of the decline in the oil and gas industry and urges policymakers to take action to address the economic downturn. The Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce (AGCC) calls for investment in the region to support economic diversification and job creation, emphasizing the need for a strategic approach to mitigate the effects of job losses in the energy sector.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2024/oct/19/theyre-killing-us-aberdeen-braces-for-end-to-north-sea-oil-as-clean-energy-plan-takes-shape> - This article explores the challenges faced by Aberdeen's oil workers as the North Sea oil industry declines and the region shifts towards clean energy. Workers express concerns about job security and the adequacy of government plans for a just transition. The article discusses the introduction of a 'skills passport' to help workers transition to renewable energy roles and highlights the mixed reactions among workers regarding retraining and job prospects in the renewable sector. It underscores the need for comprehensive planning to support workers during the energy transition.