

Scottish Parliament Debate on The Need for an Offshore Training Passport

A Friends of the Earth Scotland and Platform briefing
28th October 2021



Summary

Friends of the Earth Scotland and Platform believe an Offshore Training Passport is essential to ensure a Just Transition for workers in the energy sector. The lack of cross-sector training recognition means many offshore oil and gas workers are expected to duplicate existing training to access roles in wind. This represents a significant barrier to workers moving between industries, particularly as they are often paying out of their own pocket for training.

This is supported by the findings of a recent survey of 610 offshore oil and gas workers conducted by Platform, Friends of the Earth Scotland and Greenpeace UK which showed:

- Workers are paying an average of over £1,800 a year in training costs.
- 97% are concerned about the UK's offshore energy industry training costs.
- 65% said their employer contributed 0% to their training costs, including safety and first aid training, in the past two years - which is up from 45% before 2015
- 62% believed certificates they were asked to obtain duplicate skills they acquired at NVQ, City and Guilds or equivalent
- 62% had been asked to obtain an overlapping qualification when changing employers despite their current qualifications being in-date
- **94% of respondents said they would support an offshore passport**, which licences accredited workers to work offshore in any sector through a cross-industry minimum training requirement.

To remove this barrier for offshore workers, we urge the Scottish Government to:

1. Support the creation of an Offshore Training Passport aligning training standards across the energy sector
2. Explore whether the National Transition Training Fund or Green Jobs Workforce Academy can rectify training and skills barriers in the energy sector.
3. Use its role in the Energy Skills Alliance to push for the establishment of the Offshore Training Passport.

Training a barrier to transition

Tackling the climate crisis requires a rapid transition away from fossil fuels and into renewable energy¹. However, the workers who are already facing the effects of industry decline are not seeing any firm plan for a managed transition that would create opportunities and remove barriers to entering renewable energy industries.

The skills and experiences of offshore workers are essential to deliver a rapid transition but the current training regime is a barrier to transferring across the energy sector. As a result, in order to move into offshore wind for example, an oil and gas worker would need to obtain further qualifications, often duplicating their existing training.

¹<https://foe.scot/press-release/watershed-report-oil-reserves-increase/>

In our survey of 610 offshore workers², 97% described themselves as concerned about the cost of training, with each paying on average £1,800 a year. Increasingly precarious contracts mean many workers receive little or no support from their employers for training costs. 65% of survey respondents said their employer contributed nothing to their training costs, including first aid. This figure is a significant rise of 45% from before 2015.

Offshore workers possess skills and training that are directly transferable to renewable energy industries. Right now, a lack of standardisation is preventing this from happening unless workers commit to new training even where it duplicates existing qualifications. Given workers increasingly bear the costs of training, this represents a major barrier to a Just Transition.

The Offshore Training Passport

The training regime in the energy sector is fragmented with separate training bodies responsible for setting standards in different parts of the energy sector. As a result, offshore workers cannot readily have their existing skills and training recognised elsewhere in the energy sector.

We need a training system that prioritises the urgency and importance of a fair and safe energy transition. It is critical for barriers and costs for workers associated with the transition to be dealt with urgently.

An Offshore Training Passport would rectify this situation by aligning training and skills recognition where possible across roles and sectors, recognising that regular training is essential to health and safety, and that there may be sector specific top-ups required .

²<https://foe.scot/resource/tickets-training-the-hidden-costs-for-offshore-oil-gas-workers/>

The Passport should be accessible to all workers, including ad hoc contractors, and come with the certainty that a certificate in date does not need to be repeated. This would reduce costs significantly by avoiding duplication and open up opportunities in renewable energy to all offshore workers by providing the guarantee that their certification and experience, often built over decades, will be recognised.

The Scottish Government's role

Training in the energy sector must be based on the need to evaluate and build skills and safety of workers. The current training regime is not fit for the importance of ensuring a Just Transition away from fossil fuels in a way that protects workers and opens up pathways into renewables.

Despite warm words over several years, standard setting bodies have failed to deliver a system of cross-cutting recognition of the skills and training of workers in the energy sector. These bodies must enable standardisation by creating an Offshore Training Passport, or the Scottish and UK Government's must take far more responsibility and create this system to ensure workers can transfer their skills and experience into alternative industries.

It is vital that this barrier is addressed urgently. The Scottish Government must support the creation of an Offshore Training Passport system.

We urge the Scottish Government to:

- Commit to supporting the creation of an offshore training passport aligning training standards across the energy sector
- Explore whether the National Transition Training Fund or Green

- Jobs Workforce Academy can rectify training and skills barriers, and;
- Use its role in the Energy Skills Alliance to push for the establishment of the offshore Training Passport.

For more information contact:

**Stuart Forbes,
Parliamentary Officer
sforbes@foe.scot**