

# A TOWN CALLED BRUCE



THE WORKERS SUPPORTING BRITAIN'S  
HOMEGROWN OIL AND GAS PRODUCTION

SEPTEMBER 2024

# WELCOME TO A TOWN CALLED BRUCE!

“The Bruce platform in the UK North Sea is a community of over 300 people, of whom 160 are offshore at any one time. It’s a massive and complex asset in one of the world’s most hostile and unpredictable operating environments.

Situated 340 km north-east of Aberdeen, Bruce is accessible only by boat or helicopter, yet is intrinsically connected with communities all over the UK. Bruce’s regularly changing population is comprised of workers coming from many parts of the UK and, as the team on the Bruce platform, they are responsible for processing nearly 5% of the UK’s gas production. The oil and gas they produce reaches into countless facets of our lives from heating 24 million homes, as feedstock for medicines and as a component in the tools we use every day.

From offshore veterans to recently qualified technicians, I’ve been struck by the eagerness of our staff to talk about their work and how it relates to their families and communities at home. Yes, their jobs help provide for the material things in life and the importance of the sector as a source of quality and remunerative employment in the UK generally should be acknowledged. They also speak, however, to the pride which comes from knowing that they work in an industry which stands at the centre of providing the energy and materials which are essential to modern life.

All of us at Serica want future generations to benefit from the global energy transition but we believe that our domestic oil and gas industry should be celebrated and valued as a bridge to that future.

Bruce is one of many similar assets in the UK North Sea which together support an estimated 200,000 jobs in the UK distributed across the country. The stories you can read here have their parallels on many other platforms.

**I hope you also see the short film which accompanies this document and, having done so, that you know a little more about the people who live in A Town Called Bruce.”**



**Chris Cox**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Serica Energy plc



“The UK can’t do without the oil and gas sector if it wants to make a success of the energy transition.

A cliff-edge for investment and production would be bad for jobs and skills, redistribution of wealth, energy security in a volatile world, and, ultimately, the prospects of any credible transition for existing energy workers.

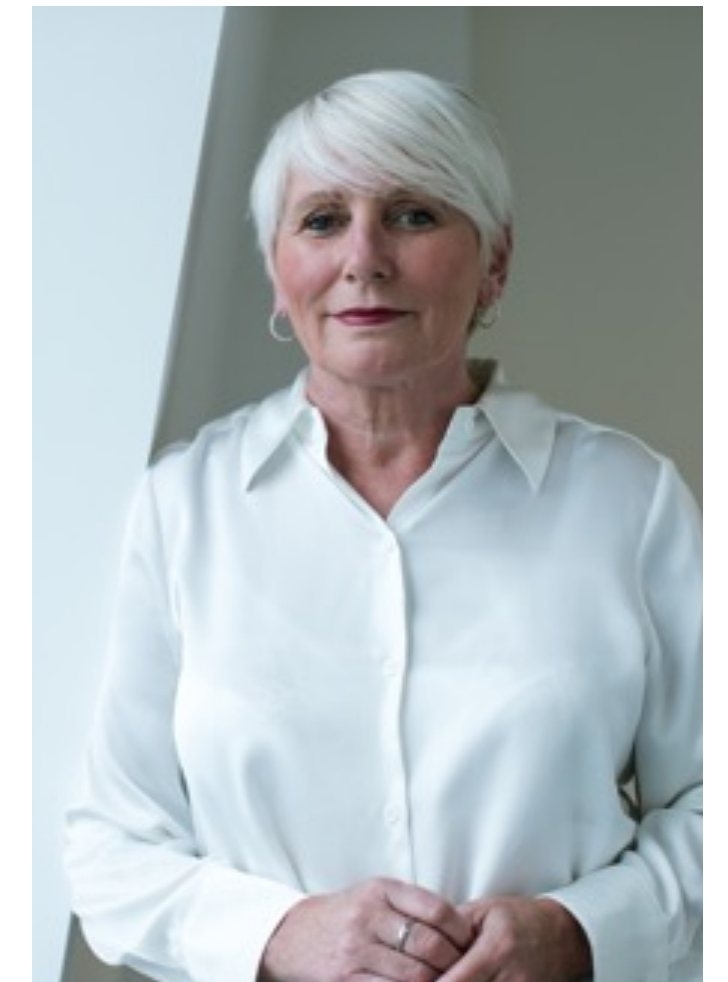
Oil and gas have been a vital part of our energy mix for decades and will continue to play a significant role in heating homes, keeping lights on, and powering heavy industries for the industrial transition. So, the question today for tomorrow is obvious:

### **Where do we get the oil and gas we will still need?**

The UK should not increase its dependencies on oil and gas imports to fuel its transition. Future oil and gas needs should be met by domestic supply, as we decarbonise the country to meet our climate obligations. These are not incompatible objectives.

If answering the energy question in the face of climate crisis is the challenge of our time, then we need a future built on a real-world plan for domestic oil and gas. We think that should be developed through better cooperation between unions, industry, and governments, with worker voice front and centre.

As a proud energy union, that’s why GMB developed the Memorandum of Understanding with BRINDEX, and we are now bringing it to life with employers like Serica to engage offshore workers directly on the frontline of UK energy production.”



**Louise Gilmour**  
GMB Scotland Secretary

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*The Bruce platform contributes  
5% of the UK’s gas production*

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## Katrina Wood has been visiting the Bruce platform since 2019. **The Subsea Controls and Operations Engineer** lives in Aberdeenshire with her two young daughters and husband.

"It's a home from home. Everyone has to get along because offshore life means you're living in each other's pockets. It's a family atmosphere as it's tough being away from your family, particularly when it's Christmas.

I love my work and the advances in technology are amazing with autonomous vehicles on the seabed and remotely-operated vehicles controlled from a tiny joystick. I'm really proud of how innovative our sector is.

During Covid, we were on the front-line, going to work when people stayed at home. The country needed oil and gas to power homes, hospitals and to provide materials for goods that needed manufactured. We were seen in a different light then.

Oil and gas is all around us and I wish people understood that more. My one-year-old daughter recently had a seizure and had to be taken by air ambulance to hospital. If we'd had to wait for the road ambulance, she'd not have made it, but it was the longest 12 minutes of my life, waiting for them, terrified. It was only later that I thought how the life-saving support we received relies on products and materials that come from oil and gas from the medicines to the helicopter.

I'm worried about the future if we start shutting down the industry early. We are very regulated and bringing our emissions down – it's in our control. If we import it all, we have no control over that, which is scary. We're an island and we should have energy and job security.

I also worry about the impact on my family and community. I want to see a secure future for my girls; where we're not in fear."



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*75% of the UK's energy needs are met from oil and gas*

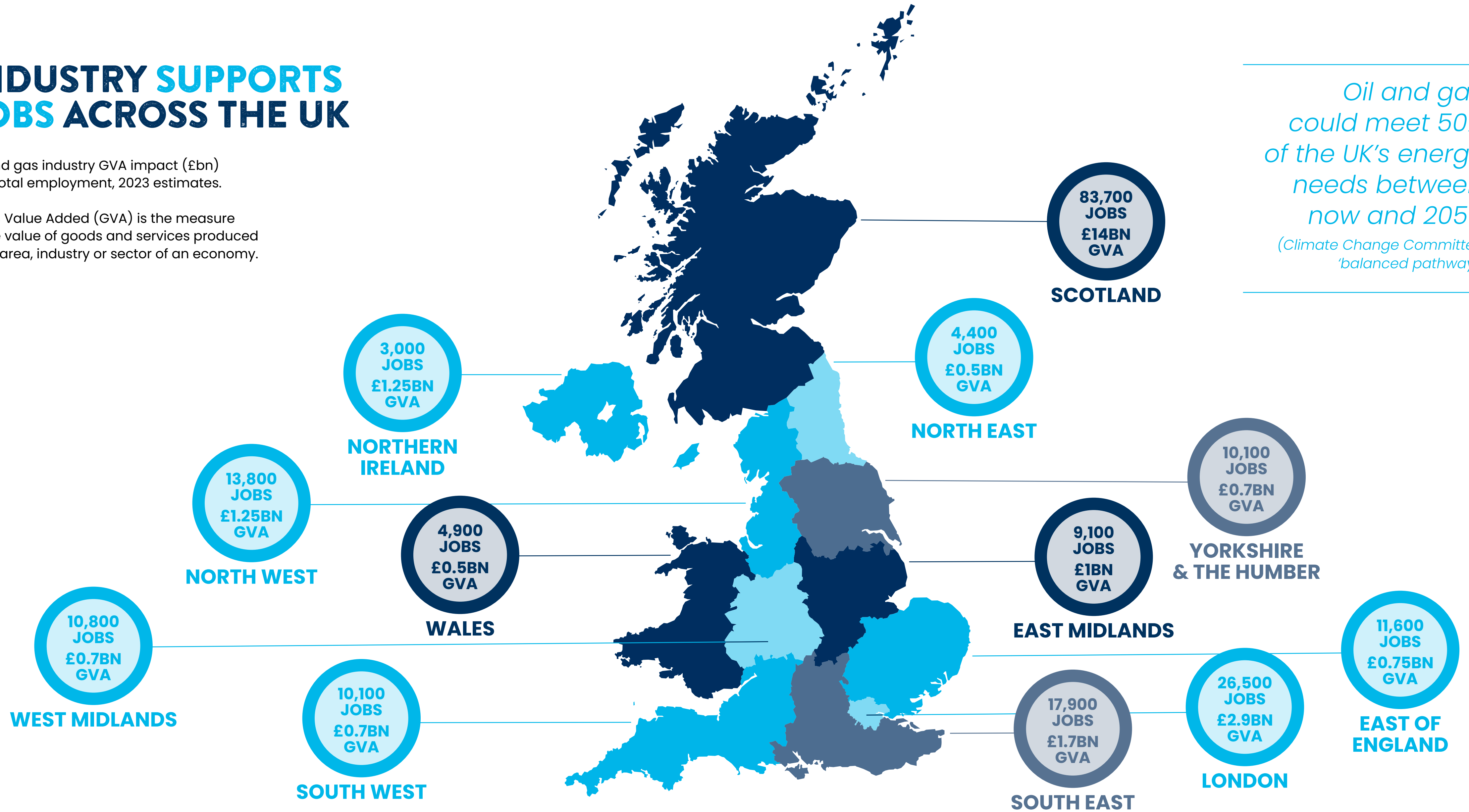
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# INDUSTRY SUPPORTS JOBS ACROSS THE UK

Oil and gas industry GVA impact (£bn) and total employment, 2023 estimates.

Gross Value Added (GVA) is the measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy.



*Oil and gas could meet 50% of the UK's energy needs between now and 2050*

*(Climate Change Committee 'balanced pathway')*

Source: Experian, commissioned by OEUK

The Bruce platform has welcomed **17 apprentices** in the last six years covering engineering, mechanical, electrical and instrumentation disciplines. **Six more apprentices** will be taken on over this year, 2025 and 2026.

"I come from Middlesbrough, which is quite a working-class town in the northeast of England. Opportunities aren't great, especially with a lot of the factories and steelworks shutting down in recent times. The only opportunities I felt I had were oil and gas and chemical-based.

I've been an instrument technician for three years. I started off as an apprentice on the Bruce, so my whole career has been here.

I'm the first in my family to work offshore. I like getting hands on experience and practical knowledge. I've got mixed feelings at the moment, because a lot of people don't understand all the things that oil and gas contributes to society. I really love what I do and I would like this to be my career going forward for a long time. It would be devastating to a place like Middlesbrough if people like me were to lose their jobs."

**Rhys Hamilton**

*Instrument technician and safety representative on the Bruce Platform*



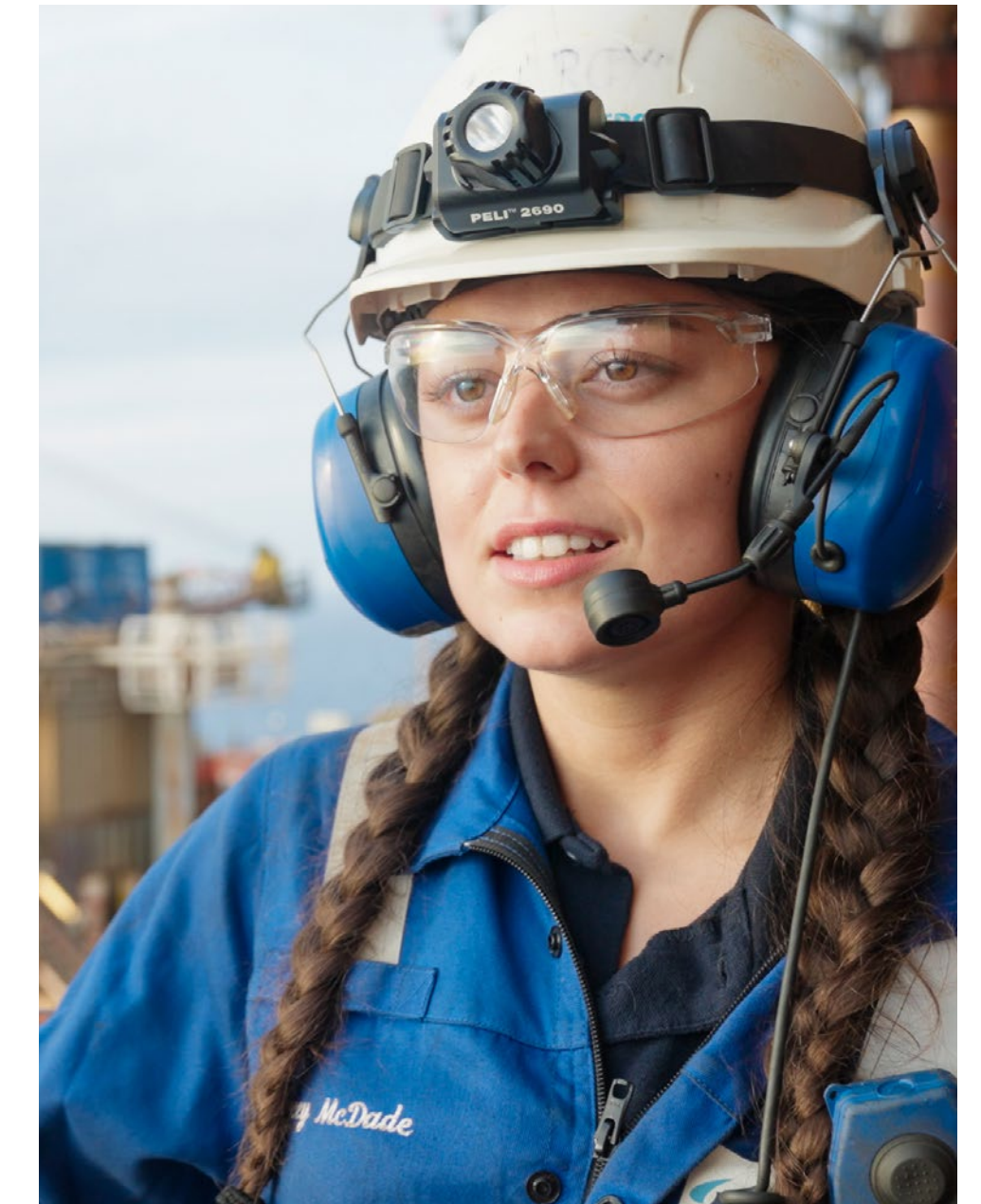
"I've only worked here a year and as a new start it was initially quite daunting coming offshore, but it's a really good industry to work in, especially the community here on Bruce which is like a home from home.

I like being able to contribute to the production of oil and gas in the UK, it's an interesting process. My dad works in the industry and he's been an inspiration, along with my older sister who also works offshore, so the whole family are involved and we all enjoy it. Continuous production of oil and gas is important for the country.

It's very worrying as a new start, because I've my whole career ahead of me and I want to stay in this industry and work towards certain goals. It's concerning that I might not have that security in the long run. That uncertainty will also make people think twice about coming into the industry."

**Darcey McDade**

*Apprentice production technician on the Bruce Platform*



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*Domestic production of oil and gas is about 50% of total UK demand*

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# OIL AND GAS IS ESSENTIAL TO EVERY FACET OF OUR DAILY LIVES

Products derived from oil and gas are all around us. Petrochemicals are used to manufacture and produce materials from medicines to everyday household items, clothing to tech.



MEDICINE



SPORTS



WIND TURBINES



TRANSPORT

*80% of UK homes are heated using natural gas*



CLOTHING



CONSTRUCTION



ELECTRONICS



COSMETICS



CHILDREN'S CAR SEATS



AVIATION



AGRICULTURE



FURNITURE



**Brian Langton is Liverpool born and bred and travels from home every few weeks for his shift on the Bruce as a **mechanical technician**. He's worked offshore for over 20 years and spent the last decade doing shifts on the platform.**

"Living in Liverpool, but travelling to Aberdeen to go offshore for my job is something I got used to over time. You develop a safety mindset working offshore; your focus is always on safety.

It's 12-hour shifts and you have to remain focused, but we always try to brighten up the day as that sets the mood for the shift ahead. We work as a team on the Bruce, you get the best results that way.

The camaraderie is fantastic. There's a close bond and the team come from all over the country to do their job in the North Sea.

I previously worked in shipbuilding, so decades ago I had to migrate my skill set when that industry died in the UK. I wanted to try something different, and my skills suited offshore.

There's a lot of local lads from Liverpool working on the rigs. It has been rewarding, but we do work hard. Now, with the cost-of-living crisis I fear for the young people. There are rewards, but you make sacrifices, like missing Christmas, birthdays and even funerals.

My grandson Joseph was interested in a career offshore and I was pleased. But now I'm worried if the industry will be there long enough. Without ongoing investment, we could be decommissioning early.

That would be devastating. It's going to be like a flashback for me from shipbuilding. The decisions being made by the government today have far reaching impacts and not just for us offshore workers, but for the supply industries all around. People all over the country, all communities are going to be affected. It could be devastating."

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*The sector contributes  
£25 billion to the economy*

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“Building on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreed between the GMB Union and BRINDEX in November 2023, both of our organisations agreed to a step change in activity for 2024 in making the case for the UK oil and gas industry and its 200,000 workers.

As such, BRINDEX and the GMB, in coordination with BRINDEX member Serica Energy, worked to organise an important GMB visit to the Bruce facility. GMB representatives engaged with the workforce and listened to the concerns, ideas and hopes of the platform’s oil and gas workers. Many of these workers have been in the sector for decades.

Oil and gas companies, its workers and the GMB Union are in unanimous agreement that a domestic supply of oil and gas offers clear economic, environmental, geopolitical, and social advantages that imported oil and gas could never offer. According to independent analysis, present Government policy could see 100,000 jobs losses in the oil and gas industry by 2030, as well as a 50% increase in the volume of imported natural gas by 2032 compared to a position of support for the sector.

Backing British workers means backing British oil and gas production. The Government is rightly concerned about retaining high skilled British workers, however, creating a more hostile environment for oil and gas production does nothing to achieve that. Government needs to listen to the workers of the British oil and gas sector.”

**Robin Allan**  
Brindex Chairman



“The best part about my trip to the Bruce platform was the opportunity to meet some of the people who work offshore and hear their stories. These are skilled people, operating in difficult conditions in the North Sea to provide us with the energy we need to power our country and power our economy. They come from all parts of the UK and we should be proud of their contribution to our energy security.

I know that trade unions and our workforce are squarely behind this industry and its future as part of the energy transition. North Sea experience has been a badge of honour globally for the last 50 years, and we need to build on this experience to deliver our energy future.

Our industry has done much to transform the nation’s prosperity – in 2023 providing £30 billion in economic value to the UK, supporting 200,000 jobs across the country. With the right investment environment, UK offshore energy companies could invest £200 billion this decade alone, supporting the UK to reach 50GW of wind, 10GW of hydrogen, producing the oil and gas we need and scaling at least 4 carbon storage clusters by 2030.

We have the ideas and the solution for an industrial strategy to deliver our energy future.

The impact of decisions made by the government today will be felt for decades to come. The best way to grow the UK economy, foster UK innovation and support UK energy security is to invest in our homegrown industry and its highly skilled people. Partnership working with government, where industry, and our workforce have a seat at the table, is critical to this success.”

**David Whitehouse**  
CEO of OEUK



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*UK oil and gas  
production emissions  
have reduced 20%  
compared to 2018  
and are on track to be  
halved by 2030*

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**Jack Everett, a father-of-two from Hull started out in the oil and gas industry at 17 as a trainee and worked his way on the Bruce platform, getting himself through Open University. He's now an **operations and production optimisation team leader** and his wife also works in the sector.**

"When I left school, I was looking at various apprenticeships and oil and gas seemed exciting. The engineering side appealed to my strengths in science and maths.

At 17 I started working at a gas terminal and that's when I realised how important the industry is and that we need to keep attracting young people into it, because a lot of the industry was ageing.

A few years ago, I decided to do an open learning degree, which was supported by my company, and it was a really proud moment to achieve that, particularly during Covid, with two young boys at home, whilst still going offshore.

On the Bruce there can be 160 people on the platform at any one time, so you feel like a family, travelling out there together and spending long days working as a team. I've worked with some people for more than 12 years. It's a way of life; more than a job. It's not your normal nine to five. Your whole family have to buy into that. My sons understand and I hope it gives them a great work ethic when they're older.

The sentiment about the industry is hard to deal with. There's some misrepresentation and people don't always understand how important oil and gas is to the country not just for cars and heat, but for manufacturing products.

Given the current thinking, I'm concerned about the impact on young people joining the industry. We're going to struggle to attract people and we could lose a lot of the skills we need. A lot of other countries are investing in developing their oil and gas alongside renewables. We could lose a lot of good people to other countries."

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*The oil and gas sector supports 200,000 jobs all over the country*

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# THANKS TO THE BRUCE TEAM



VIEW A TOWN CALLED BRUCE FILM