

Peterhead, 15 Years from Now

Income:

The following offshore windfarms would have been operational for at least the previous ten years. We can thus assume that NE Scotland has received between £140 - £180 million each year in community benefit.

Moray West

Moray East

Beatrice

Caledonia

Stromar

Broadshore

Buchan

Marramwind

Hywind Scotland

Aberdeen EOWDC

Muir Mhor

Kincardine Floating

Bowdun

Bellrock

SSENT (land-based)

Multiple BESS (land-based)

Current Shortfalls:

The population perceives the government is unable to adequately invest in several important areas

- Access to doctors
- Patchy End-of-Life nursing availability
- Stretched district nursing services
- Not enough funded childcare places
- Poor travel infrastructure
- Not enough apprenticeships for key skills

Although in principle, community benefit should not prop-up government under-investment in the above areas, it would nevertheless be convenient to use some of it, to make life better for people, where possible. Another important incentive for using some of the annual money for these, is the perception by the populace that windfarm income is helping to make their lives better. This will reduce the knee-jerk objections to infrastructure build, that is essential to achieve electrification.

The windfarms could in turn, use this to enhance their public relations, saying “Look what we are doing for the people of N.E. Scotland!”

Probably the biggest enhancement for the NE, including Peterhead, would be the completion of the NE Scotland rail link: Aberdeen, Dyce (the airport), Cruden Bay, Peterhead, St. Fergus and Fraserburgh. This greatly improved communications would give the NE the opportunity to evolve to become similar to Scotland’s prosperous ‘Central Belt’ between Glasgow and Edinburgh.

In terms of manpower, it takes less workers to repair and refurbish windfarms compared to extracting oil and gas. There will be a steady decline of the latter’s jobs over the years. Not many existing oil & gas workers would be needed to retrain and work on the windfarms.

What does not stand up to detailed scrutiny is the assertion that the “electrification build will result in local jobs”. This work is specialist, both on and off-shore, local people just don’t have the skills. Even the promised build of several hundred new homes requires technical people, bricklayers, roofers, joiners and electricians, etc. We all know how difficult it is to get one when needed!

The ‘elephant in the room’ is climate change! The biggest unknown for us here in Peterhead is what might happen to the AMOC, which we call the Gulf Stream. As the Arctic is warming twice as fast as the rest of the planet, the long-term viability of this vital current is under threat. Greenland’s freshwater melt is a particular worry, affecting the AMOC deep return current. If the current stops, we, in this part of Scotland, will face arctic winters lasting several months, affecting all walks of life; fishing, agriculture, travel and just keeping homes warm. The problem is, just like a volcano erupting, it is difficult to predict when, although there are signs it is starting. What we can say is, if the planet continues to warm at the rate it is at the moment, the AMOC is likely to fail. Thus, the best laid schemes of mice and men in NE Scotland will come to naught!

What Will Peterhead and Surroundings Look Like in 2040?

- The NE rail link will be operating
- A fleet of electric mini-vans (possible driverless by then) will connect the outlying villages with the town. Heavily subsidized by community benefit income, so fares will be minimal. Routes and timings altered by app requests and AI.
- Each village will have a car park with some chargers, so the bus passengers can drive their shopping to their house (the last mile)
- Likewise, there will be an adequately-sized car park with chargers at Peterhead train station.
- Aberdeenshire Planning will have worked in tandem to have made permissions for the new housing estates and industry parks that the revitalized communications will have attracted.
- Food banks in Peterhead will be adequately stocked, subsidized by community benefit
- Each village will have a basic 2 room surgery, attended by a doctor and a practice nurse on a weekly Rota-basis. Someone needing to see a doctor will just turn up, wait their turn and be seen. (this is done in rural Hungary, where I live part-time)
- Further treatment/tests will be provided by specialists in the regional hospitals of Peterhead and Fraserburgh

- Any shortage of childcare places and breakfast clubs will have been helped by community benefit subsidies.
- District nursing and end-of-life palliative care will be augmented by community benefits

If all this seems a bit like wishful thinking, remember that community benefit income into the Buchan area will exceed £20 million per annum.

The influx of new businesses and families will provide Aberdeenshire Council with extra revenue through business and domestic rates, also increased Holyrood funding for a bigger regional population.