



Just Transition: Christopher Niemi

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Berwick Bank Offshore Wind Farm is driving the transition to a net zero future, but it would not be possible without our highly skilled team. As part of our new Just Transition job series, we are talking to team members who have made the move to renewables from a previously high-carbon role.

Just Transition: Christopher Niemi
Job title: Control and instrumentation engineer
Length of position: Four months

Christopher Niemi recently joined SSE Renewables after more than a decade in the oil and gas industry. Chris is looking for longevity in this career, and so chose an industry that is set to be the future of energy production:

Tell us a bit more about your previous role in the energy sector?

Prior to joining SSE Renewables, I worked in Aberdeen's oil and gas industry for 14 years, based both on and offshore. My role was to support the process control and safety systems located offshore as part of ensuring that the plant was operating safely and efficiently.

Why did you decide to make the switch to a job in renewables?

Where I live in the north-east, I can actually see the new SSE Seagreen project. Looking out into the North Sea every day and seeing first-hand the development of the offshore wind farm

site sparked my interest in renewables, and so I decided to make the switch. I was also driven by the need to future-proof my own career. Climate change is also incredibly high on my own agenda. The emergency is real, and we are only just beginning to see how badly it will affect future generations. Unlike oil and gas production, renewables are powered by an infinite resource, so jobs within the sector have greater security and longevity.

What does your current role involve on a day-to-day basis?

I am fortunate that I get to work across numerous different renewables projects, including Berwick Bank Offshore Wind Farm. This gives me the opportunity to fully understand the work SSE Renewables is leading on to help reach net zero.

In comparison to my old role in oil and gas, I am more involved in large project-based work. My role requires the ongoing

assessment of design requirements versus system functionality to make sure we are providing a robust solution. At present, I am ensuring the designs we have in place for the control systems infrastructure will be sound once built. As the building takes place, I will be heavily involved in the ongoing testing and commissioning of the equipment.

What skills have you been able to transfer from oil and gas to renewables?

There are many similarities with my old position in oil and gas, and despite some small process changes, I have been able to make a streamlined swap from oil and gas to renewable energy.

Did you require any additional training/ upskilling for this role in renewables?

As with any job, there is continued learning and development to adopt new skills. Personal development is very important to me and I'm always looking for ways to further my own knowledge. Despite the fundamentals of this role with SSE Renewables being the same as my previous position in oil and gas, the learning is an ongoing process. In this new role, there is a lot of new terminology, and I need to learn about the new systems.

Why was it important to you to transition to a low carbon role?

Energy is a huge part of the north-east's economy. It has employed thousands of people over the years through oil and gas production, but, like any industry, it is evolving. The north-east of Scotland has the biggest potential out of any area to make the switch to renewables. Using existing knowledge and capabilities, we are already set for a green future, and this is something I wanted to be part of.

Green energy production is inevitably the future. It's a big leap from high carbon production from oil and gas, and coal power, but the reality is that we have the skillset required to make the transition work.

Any advice you would give to others considering making the transition from a high carbon to low carbon role?

The move from oil and gas to renewables is not as scary as you may think. Renewables has been built with the knowledge of energy generation from oil and gas, so the principles are effectively the same.

I'd encourage anyone considering a career in renewables to explore available opportunities; it is a vast industry and there are lots of different positions available to help us reach net zero.

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