Energy expert warns Shell won't be last company to move jobs from Aberdeen

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Shell's decision to move a number of jobs from Aberdeen to London is a sign of a wider shift in the energy industry, according to an industry expert.

Paul de Leeuw, director of the Energy Transition Institute at Robert Gordon University, was speaking after the oil giant confirmed certain roles in its development, subsurface and wells teams will move to the capital from next year.

Mr de Leeuw, who has more than 33 years' experience in the global energy sector, said the move reflected a trend across the industry.

But he also warned of the impact such decisions could have on workers and their families.

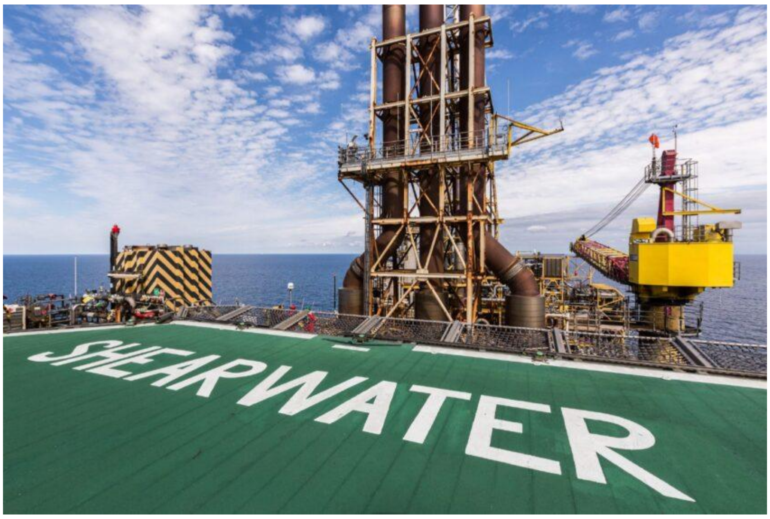
"These are real people. There's real families, real mortgages who are going to have to move because they're going to have to move where the opportunities are," he said.

Shifting focus from UK to globally

Mr de Leeuw said the decision was part of a broader pattern in which energy companies were moving global teams to different locations.

"The amount of drilling and wells we do in the North Sea and the subsurface and development work we do is rapidly diminishing," he said.

"If you look at Shell's worldwide portfolio, they're very clear where they are going to invest their money.



Shell's Shearwater production hub in the UK North Sea, operated by Adura. Image: Shell

"Investment drives activity. And of course, that drives the jobs and the people that need to do that.

"This trend is following what other companies already have done.

"Companies who had global teams here have pulled them out and moved them overseas.

"This won't be the last company who's got a shifting focus from the UK to global activities."

Aberdeen losing jobs

Shell’s Prime Four Business Park office is home to some of the company’s global teams, while its international headquarters are in London.

It is understood the roles being moved are within these global teams rather than Adura, Shell’s joint North Sea venture with Equinor.

Mr de Leeuw, who has held senior roles with Shell, Marathon Oil, Amoco, BP, Venture Production and Centrica, said: “It’s not necessarily about jobs. It’s about location and creating new hubs.

“They want to create, put these people together in the same place.

“The jobs will still be there in the country, but they are not in Aberdeen.”

More than 1,000 workers from Shell moved to Adura when the 50-50 venture was formed in December 2025, combining the companies’ UK offshore oil and gas businesses.

Adura employs about 1,300 people in Aberdeen, with its headquarters on Union Street.

It has ownership of the Jackdaw and Rosebank fields, which are yet to be approved by the UK Government.

Lack of investment impact

Mr de Leeuw said Aberdeen needed to ensure it remained an attractive location for energy companies.

“It’s not about there’s no investment. It’s not about there’s no activity. It’s not about there’s no jobs,” he said.

Professor Paul de Leeuw, director of the Energy Transition Institute at Robert Gordon University.

“They’re just not happening in the UK. So people are pulling their resources where the activity is.

“They’re literally following the investment. And that’s what we see happening now.

“I can see this happening more and more unless we change our thinking and approach towards how we manage the energy system in the UK.

“If we want to keep these jobs here, we’re going to have to make sure we either make them the right centre for the hub location, or we need to make sure the investment is here by having the people here.”

Shell told The Press and Journal that Aberdeen “remains an important location” for its UK operations.