



Measuring Progress for a Just Transition: Indicators of Transition in the Northeast of Scotland



UNIVERSITY OF
ABERDEEN



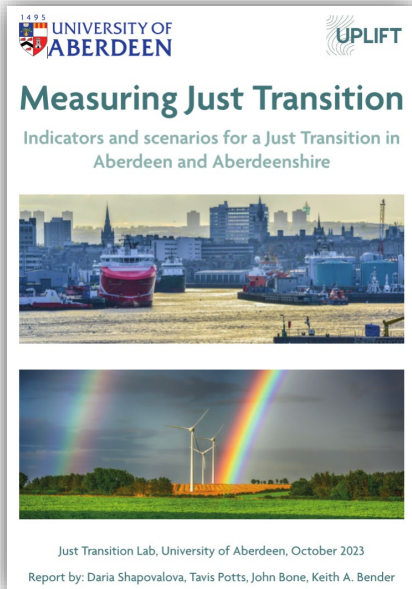
Project team

- Just Transition Lab www.abdn.ac.uk/jtl
- Interdisciplinary Research Centre focusing on the process & impacts of change from transitions with emphasis on communities, policy, health, employment, participation and technology. Working in energy cities and regions, place-based approaches and emphasizing action research and engagement.





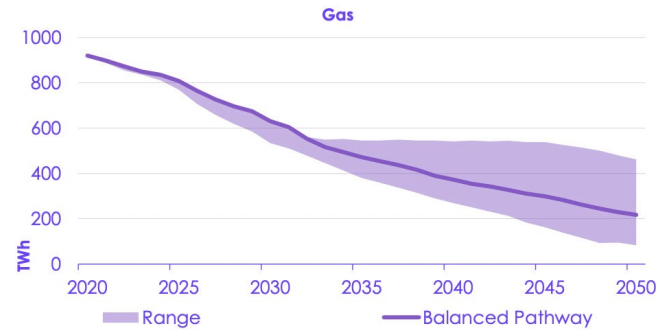
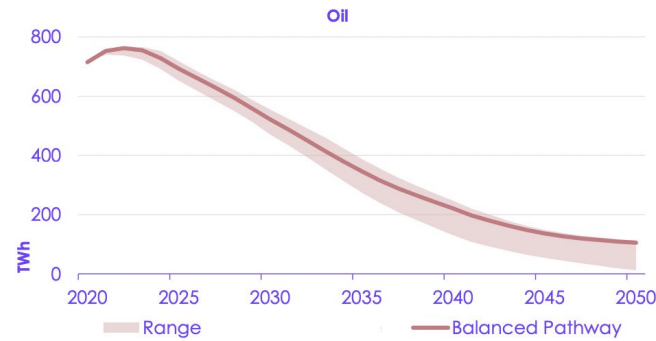
- Uses **Rapid Evidence Assessment methodology** to study how the presence of oil and gas industry shaped the region
- Studies the existing **visions for Just Transition**
- Engages with **170 sources across academia, local media, local and national authorities and the industry**, published between 1966 and today (from 4000!)
- Identifies **benefits and challenges** of being an 'oil capital'
- Identifies **priorities** for place-based Just Transition



- Identifies **themes and indicators for a holistic Just Transition** in the region
- Uses **evidence, data analysis, and participatory research** to map and present the indicators
- Collates **local and national data** from national statistics, local authorities, public bodies, third sector, and the industry to present a comprehensive picture of the region
- Engages with **data and policy on jobs and skills; equality and wellbeing; democratic participation; and community empowerment, revitalisation, and net zero**

Aberdeen: “Black gold and the Silver City”

- Historical industries in fisheries , manufacturing
- 1969 – discovery of oil in the North Sea
- Hub for North Sea oil and gas development and a base for subsea engineering and other related services
- 1999 – peak production
- 2014 – oil price slump and socio-economic fallout
- 2019 –Just Transition Commission
- COVID lockdown
- 2020 – Scottish Government Net Zero 2045 / UK 2050
- 2020 – Aberdeen City Net Zero Vision
- 2022+ Regional developments: ScotWind, ETZ, Green Freeport, H Hub, NESCAN Hub - lots of action and overlap.
- 2024 – UK North Sea at the center of political debates



Benefits and challenges of Aberdeen's oil and gas connections

- **Local economy**
- **Population growth**
- **Employment**
- **Higher earnings**
- **Local & transport infrastructure**
- **Centre for excellence**

- **Decline in traditional industries**
- **Removal of regional assistance**
- **Pressure on housing & LA**
- **Inequality**
- **Vulnerability to oil price slumps**
- **Lack of local control**

“The city of Aberdeen has an air of confidence and self-assurance about it, which is sadly rare in these times of closures, lay-offs and failures of industry large and small throughout Britain”. (Local Press 1980)

“The oil boom brought prosperity but it also brought rocketing prices. Dining out became an expensive luxury, except for those on expense accounts, and buying a house put the family budget deep into the red”. (Granite City; History of Aberdeen, 1989)



“The news reported that the oil boom was over and that Aberdonians were going back to fishing and farming! The economic future of the area looked to be in the lap of the gods. Cars were seen around the city displaying stickers which read ‘Please God give us another chance and we promise not to throw it away again’”.(Running the Granite City: 1996)

Stories true and apocryphal circulated of people driving to collect food parcels in high end sports cars and unemployed oil workers with homes too big to sell. The city became a prism through which to understand the longer-term effects of the fossil economy and its volatility, but also a springboard for the development of a nascent renewables sector (Hinde 2022)

Themes for indicators

Employment, earnings, and skills

Housing, poverty, and wellbeing

Just Transition in
Aberdeen and
Aberdeenshire

Community empowerment, revitalization and net zero

Democratic participation



Jobs, skills, and earnings

- Employment patterns
- Oil, gas, and energy employment
- Unemployment
- Skills
- Skills and jobs
- Earnings
- Workers' rights



Equality and wellbeing

- Housing
- Fuel poverty
- Deprivation and food insecurity
- Health
- Green spaces



Democratic participation

- Trust in local institutions and government
- Social values on climate change
- Deliberative processes



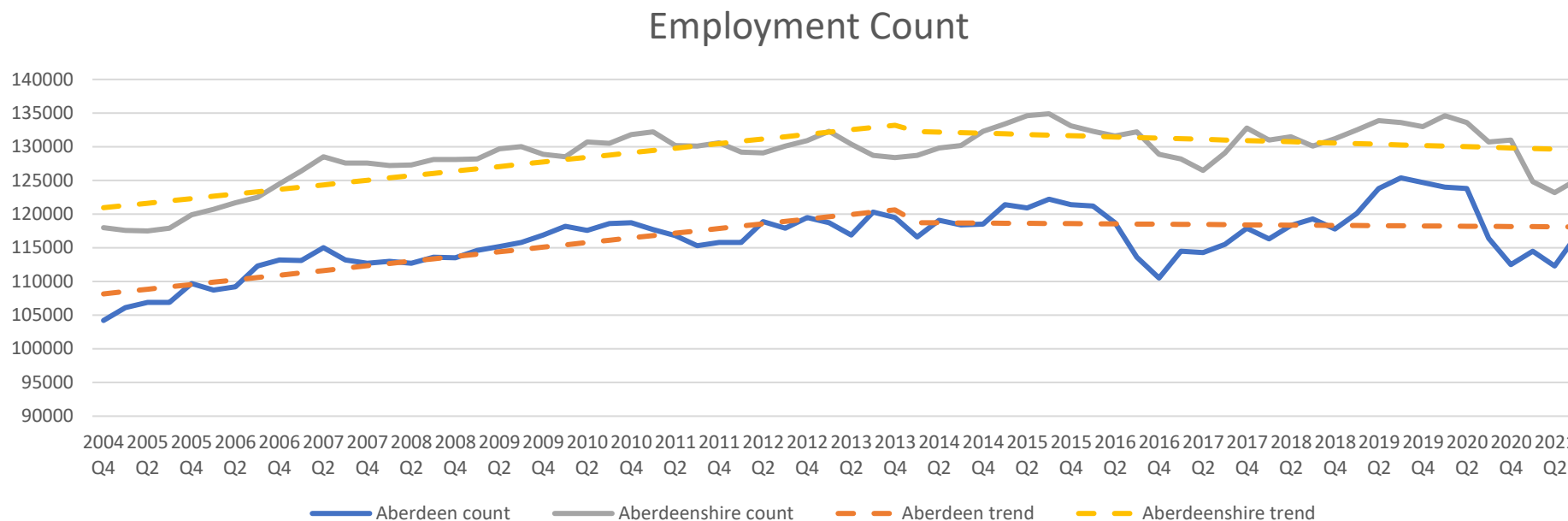
Community empowerment, revitalization, and net zero

- Community ownership
- Community energy
- Economic diversification
- Sustainable and active travel
- Net zero and climate adaptation

JUST TRANSITION

Employment, earnings, and skills

- Settled on six areas: employment patterns, employment in energy jobs, unemployment, skills, skills and jobs; earnings
- Employment
- Clear break in 2013



Number and Trends of People in Employment in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire

Source: <http://statistics.gov.scot>.

Employment, earnings and skills: Energy Employment

Direct Oil and Gas Employment by Region

	Aberdeen City	Aberdeenshire	North-East Scotland	Scotland	Great Britain
2015	25,600	4,800	30,600	31,600	37,250
2016	21,010	5,200	26,010	27,025	34,600
2017	21,010	5,200	26,015	26,035	30,350
2018	19,015	5,260	25,020	25,050	30,500
2019	19,015	5,505	24,020	25,040	30,350
2020	19,030	6,010	25,035	25,050	30,300
2021	17,000	3,300	21,000	22,000	26,000

- NE/Scotland has majority of O&G employment
- Falling O&G employment (31% drop in NE)

Energy Sector Employment by Region

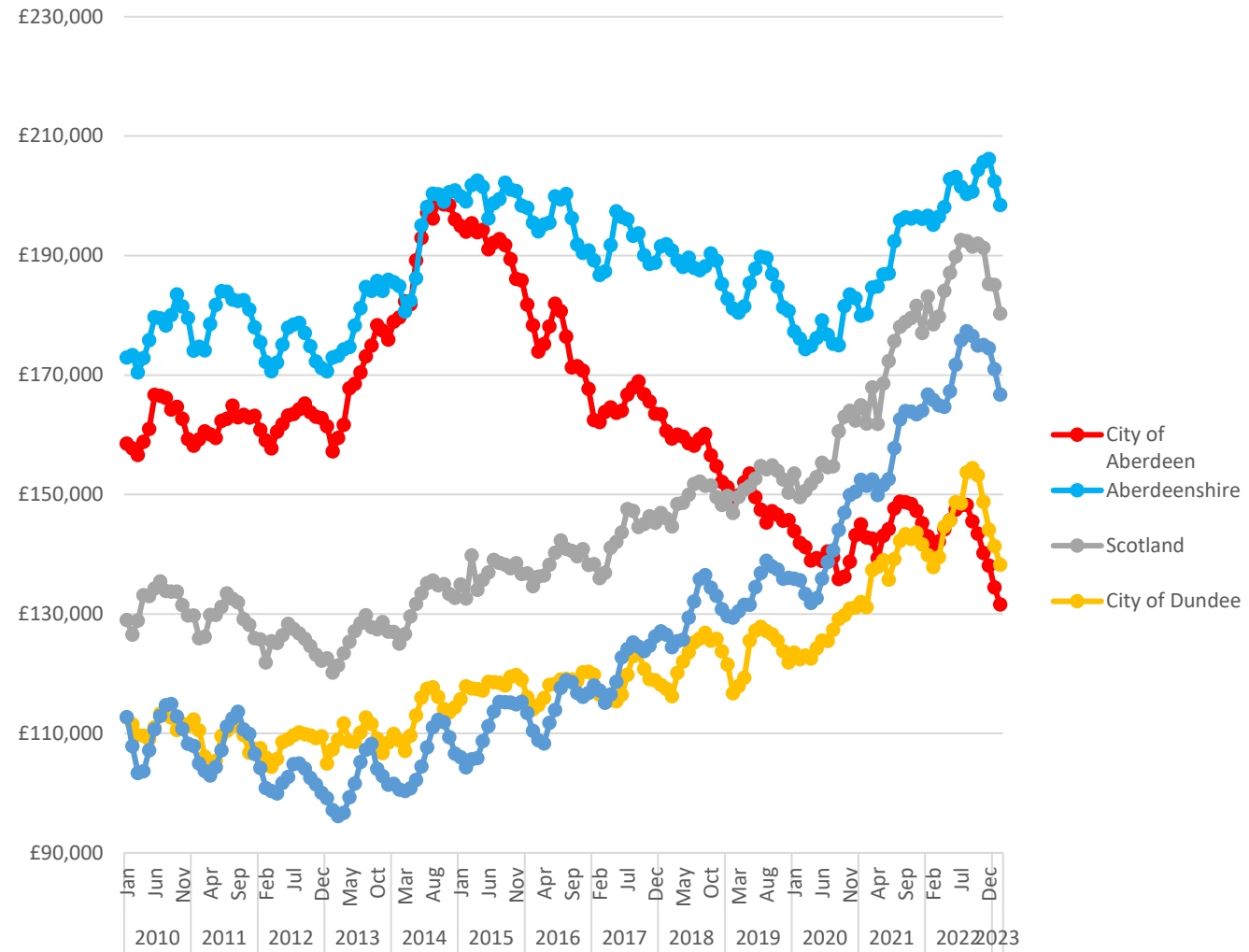
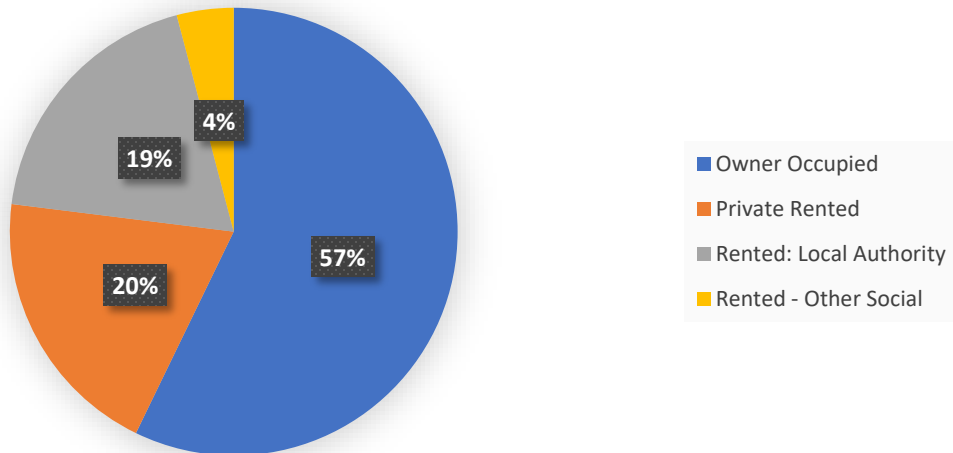
	Aberdeen City	Aberdeenshire	North-East Scotland	Scotland
2015	30,830	10,095	41,165	73,275
2016	25,900	9,670	36,425	68,450
2017	27,435	9,220	36,375	68,900
2018	24,735	9,115	34,575	66,350
2019	25,760	9,445	34,625	68,900
2020	23,815	10,080	34,405	69,450
2021	22,505	7,205	30,880	65,600

- More moderate reduction in energy sector jobs (25% drop)
- Implies a 6% gain in other energy related employment

Housing

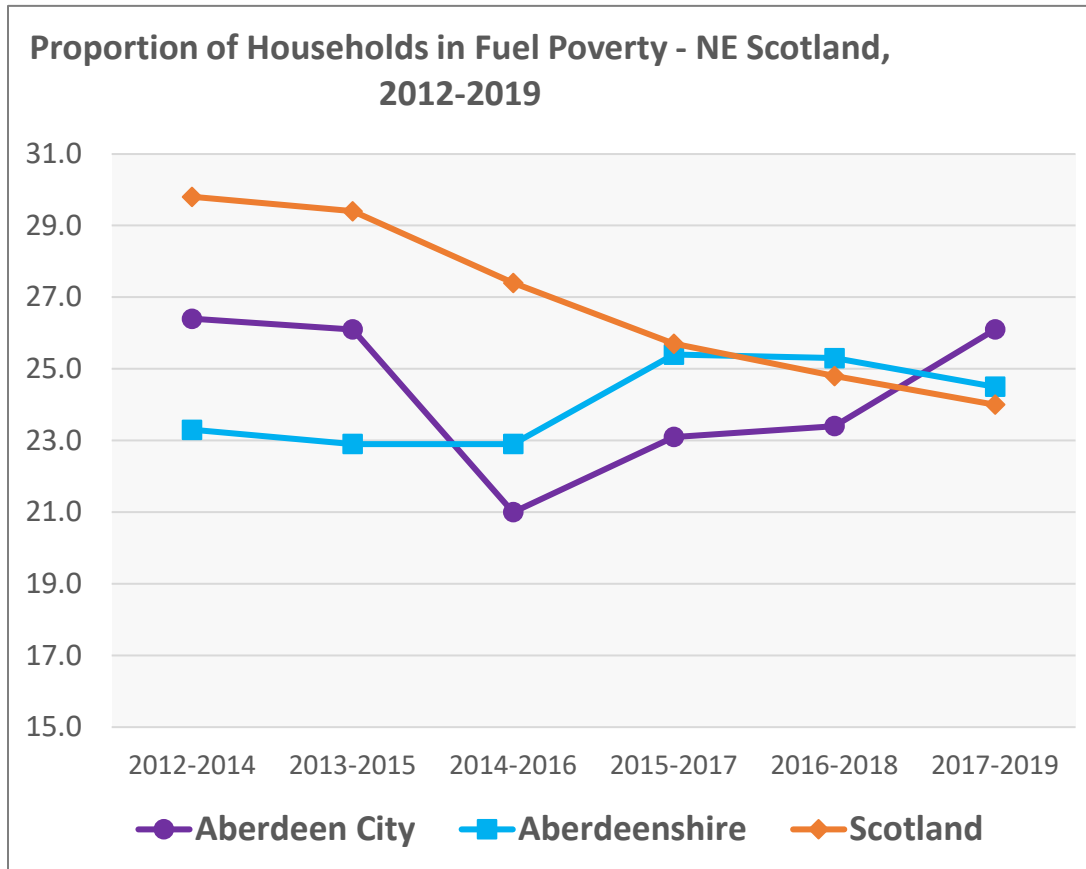
- Housing, Health and Wellbeing
- Housing Prices and Oil & Gas: Uneven Development
- Residualisation of Social/Public Housing
- Investment and Expansion of Private Rented Sector
- PRS, insecurity, quality and health
- Social/Public Housing

Aberdeen Housing Tenure 2023

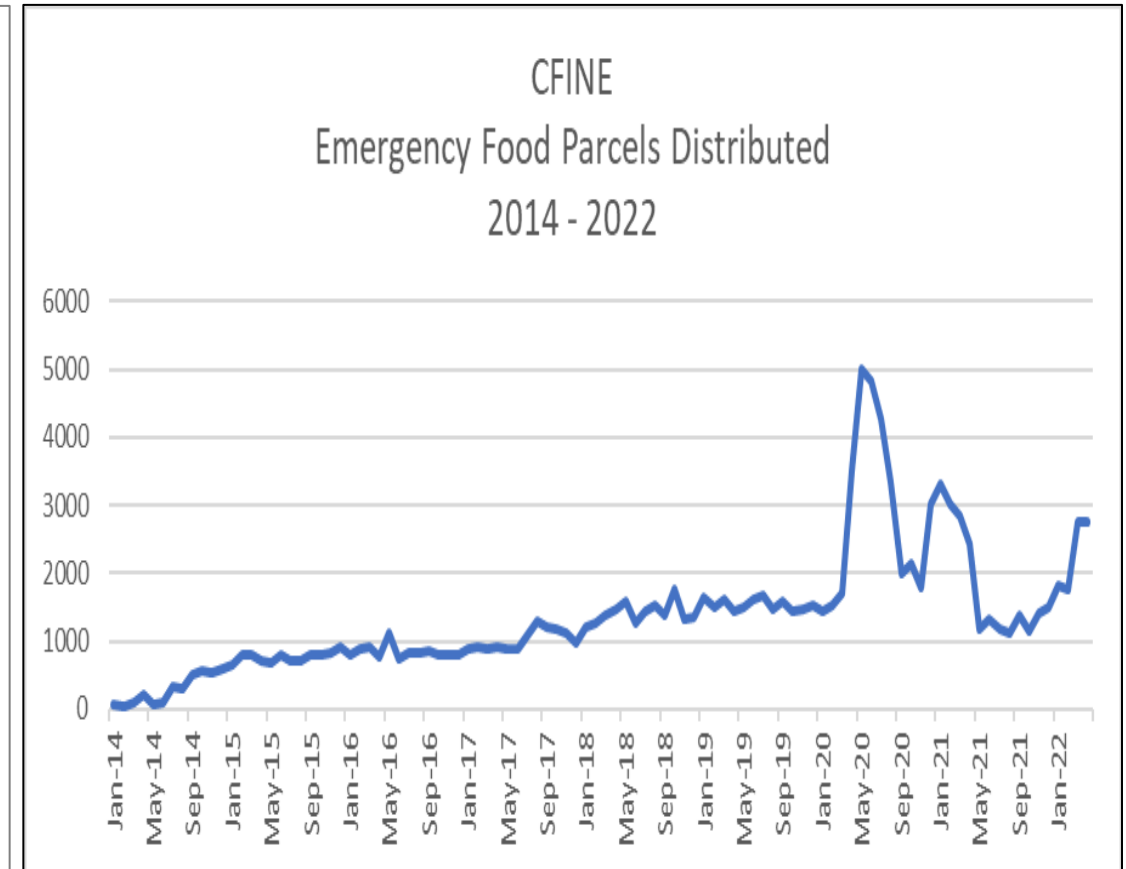


Source:UK Land Registry House Price Index via Aberdeen City Council 2023

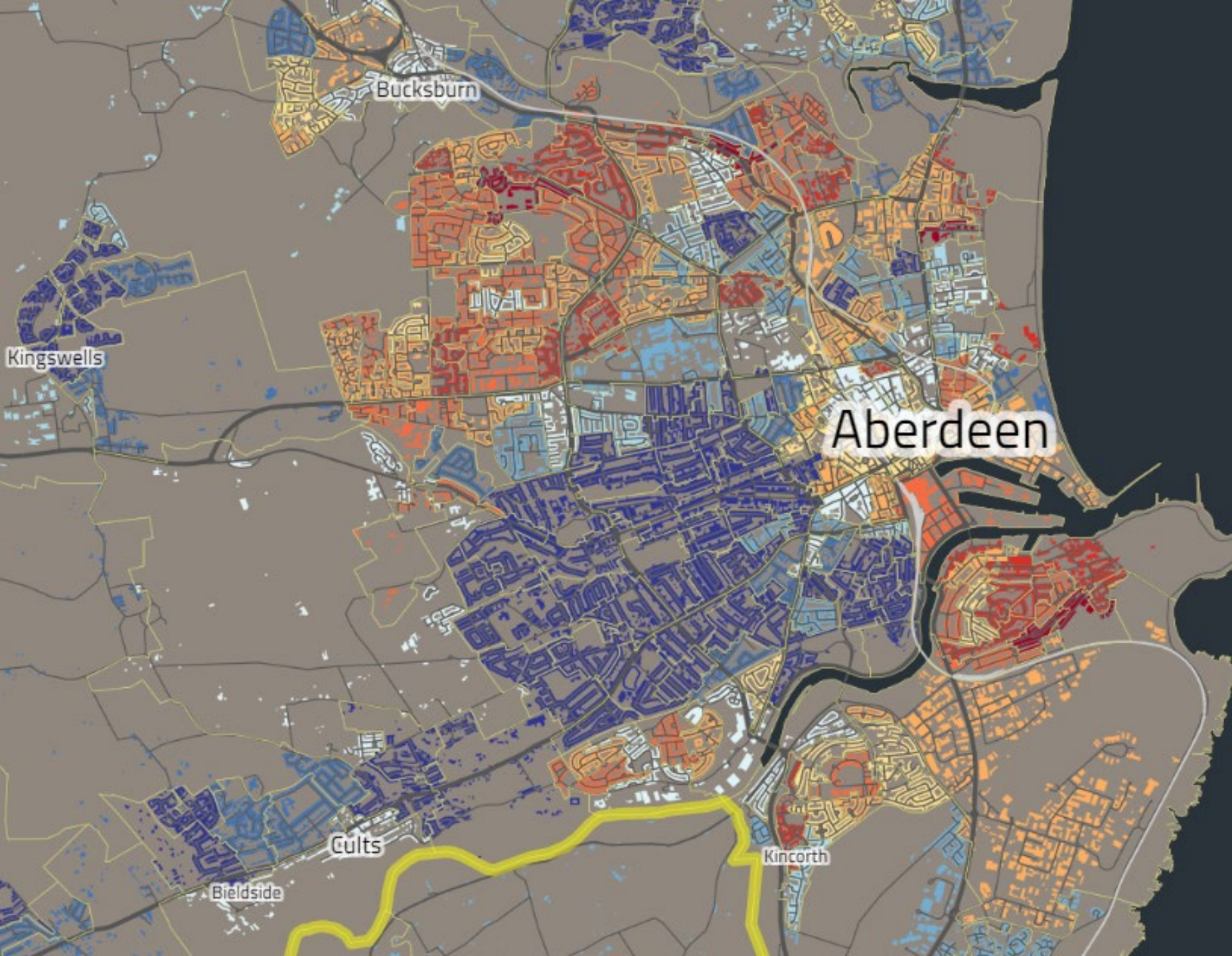
Energy and Food Insecurity



Source: Scottish Government via Aberdeen City Council



Source: CFine

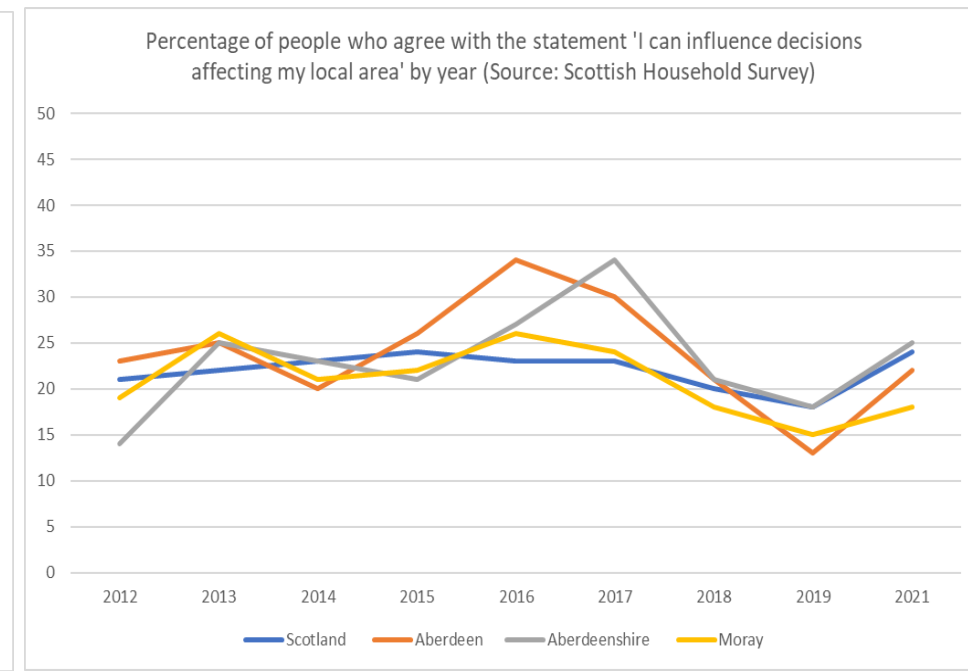
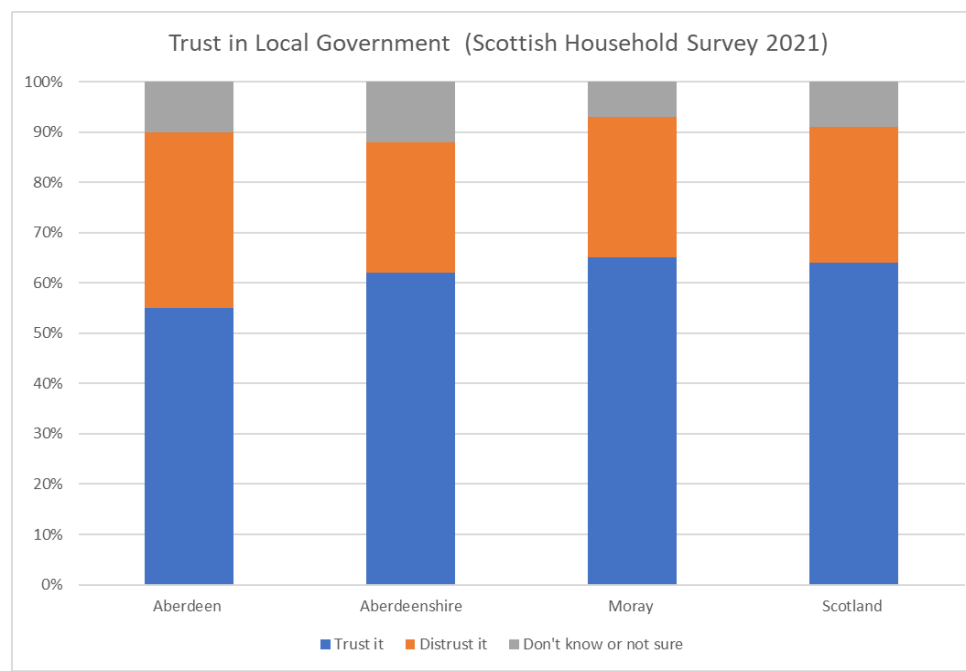


Access to jobs and training associated with delivery of the net zero targets will likely *remain skewed towards certain socioeconomic groups*, unless this issue is proactively addressed.

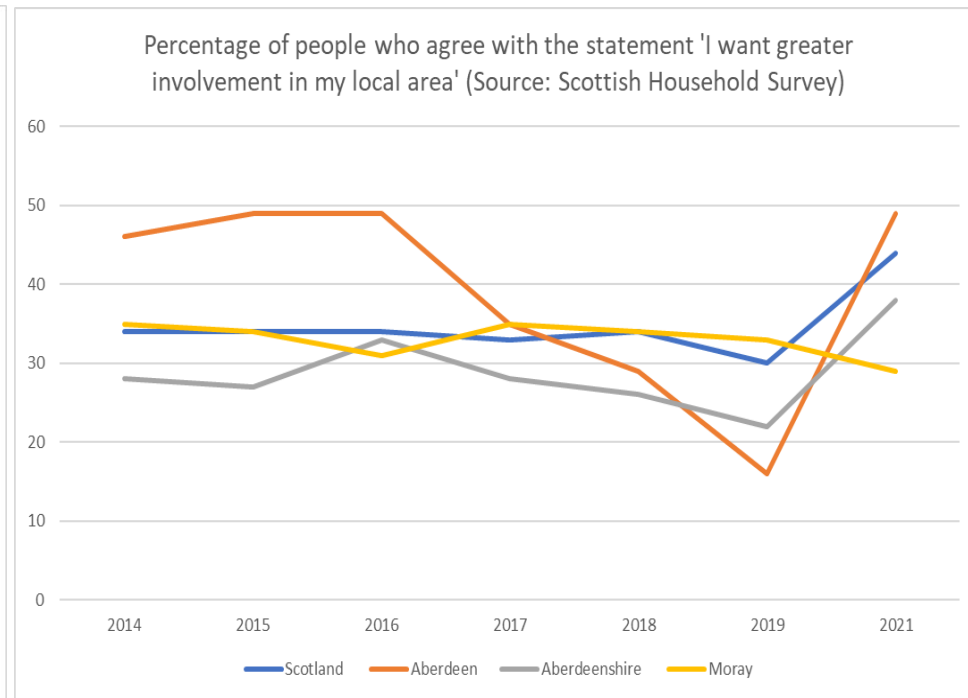
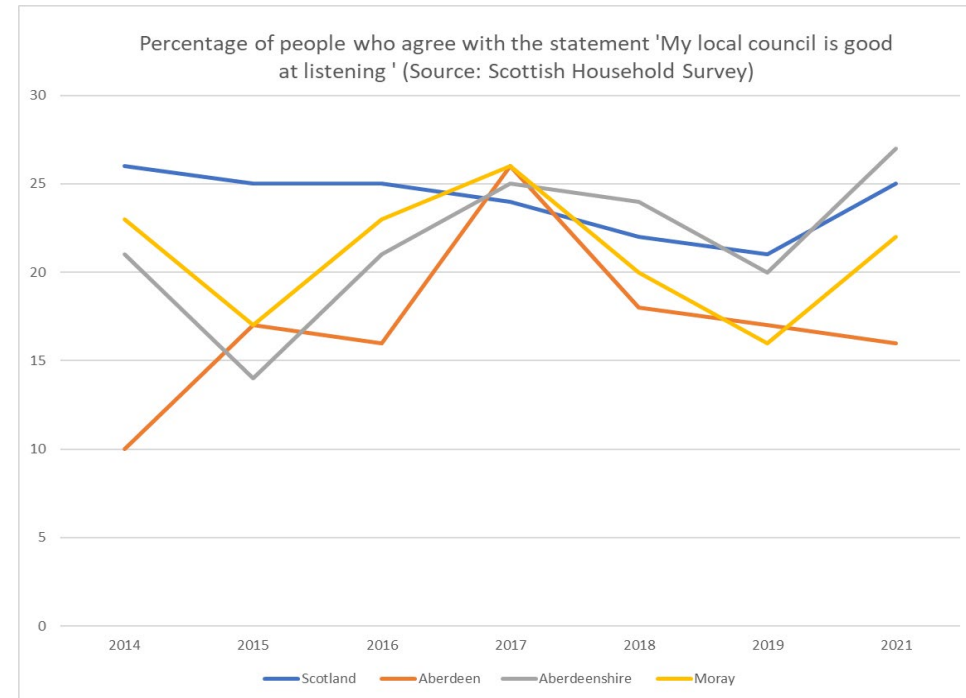
Those in *lower skilled, low income or unstable employment are less likely to have the funding, information or flexibility to take advantage* of new training opportunities.

▶ Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan 2020

Democratic Participation



Trust in Institutions





UK Parliamentary Constituency	Number of Assets	Number of Community Groups	Area of Assets (hectares)
Aberdeen Central	4	4	2.21
Aberdeen Donside	0	0	0
Aberdeen South and North Kincardine	2	2	67.02
Aberdeenshire East	11	9	29.22
Aberdeenshire West	16	4	475.48

Figure 40: Community ownership in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire¹⁶⁹

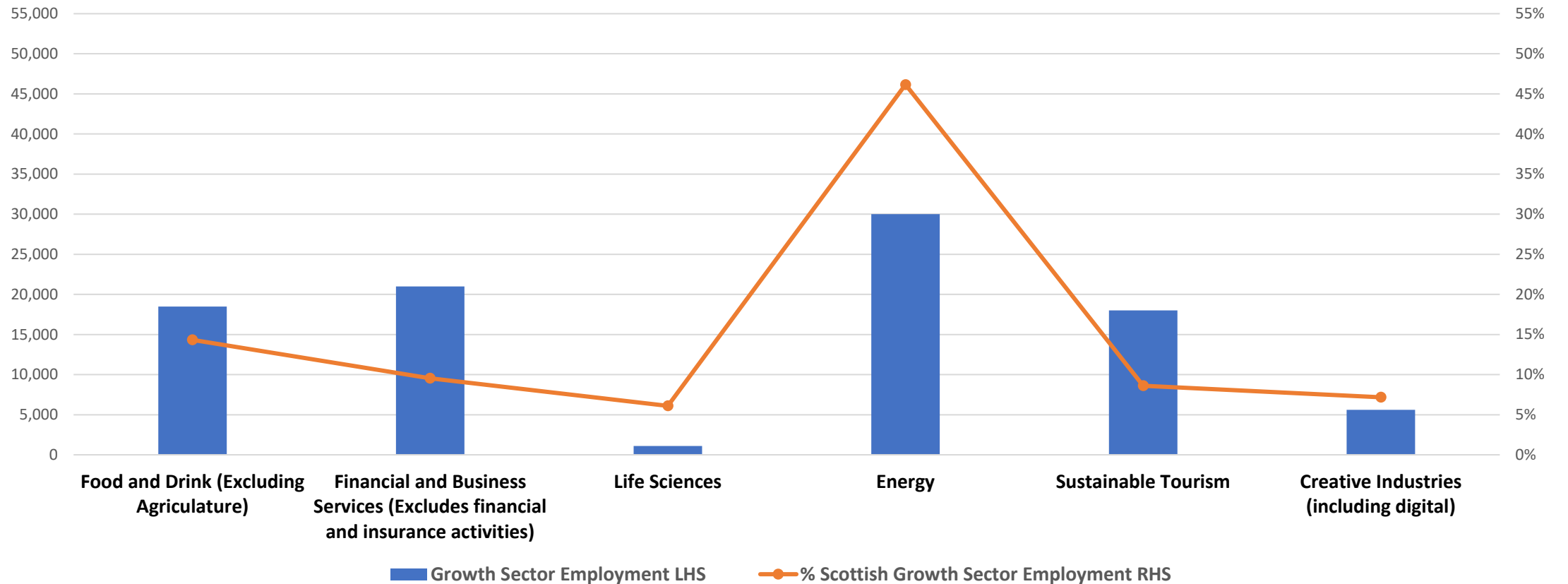
Community energy ownership

Local Authority	Number of Assets	Number of Community Groups	Area of Assets (hectares)
Aberdeen City	4	4	2.21
Dundee City	1	1	0.23
City of Edinburgh	8	8	1.39
Glasgow City	19	15	6.41
Inverness and Nairn*	9	6	409.36
Stirling	15	11	106.66

* Inverness belongs to Highland Council, which covers a large area, so the data for Inverness and Nairn was taken from breakdown of community owned assets by Parliamentary Constituency instead

Economic diversification

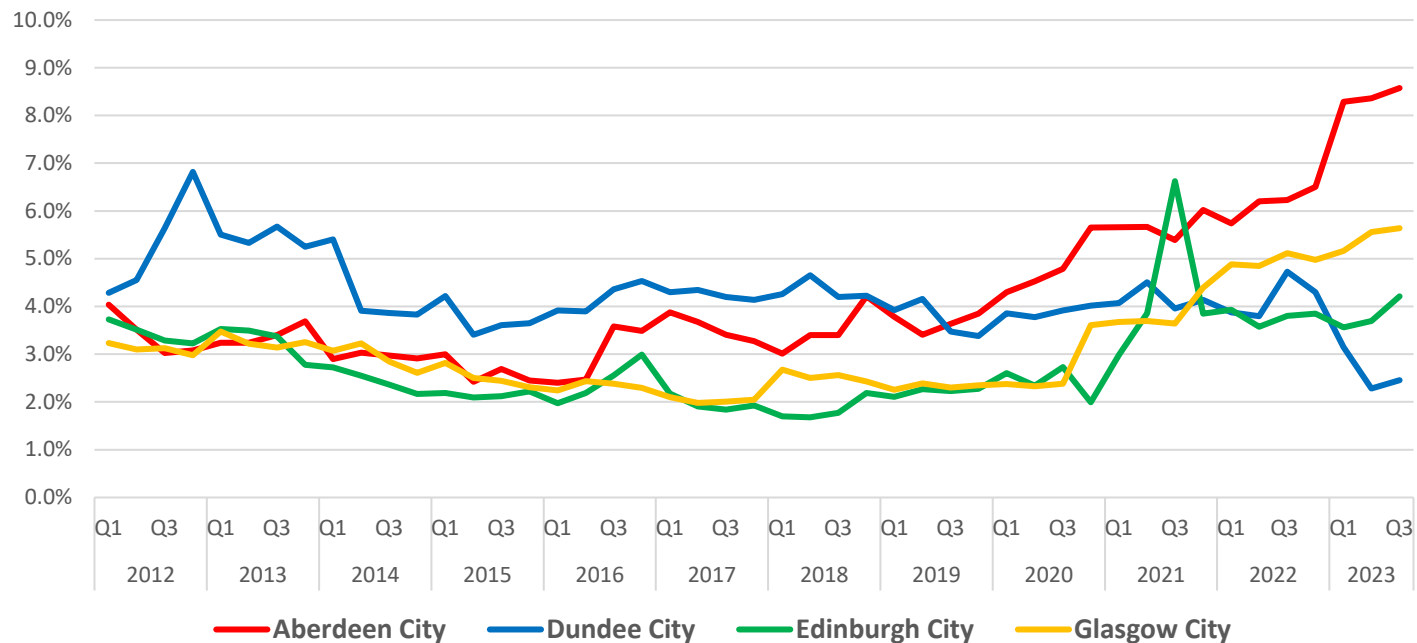
Growth Sector Employment & Share (%), North East, 2021



Repopulating the 'ghost town'


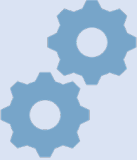

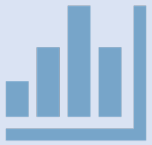

Retail market vacancy rates: Aberdeen City, Dundee City, Edinburgh City and Glasgow City - 2012 - 2023

Source: CoStar



- Union Street initiative
- Beach redevelopment initiative
- Union Terrace gardens

Key recommendations

	<p>Participation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen transition dialogues and community assemblies; consider regional citizens assemblies as materially linked to policy. • Build community capacities to enhance social innovation and community wealth building. Invest commensurate with industry Net Zero skills. • Invest in reaching and empowering marginalised and under-represented groups to improve agency in key transition issues (e.g. fuel poverty, greenspace, transport).
	<p>Workforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support retraining/new skills development for energy transition jobs. • Targeted outreach to female and underrepresented school students on career opportunities in a post-oil economy. • Ensure a low-carbon and expanded transportation network so that workers and small firms can easily move and take advantage of new economic opportunities.
	<p>Decarbonisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a unified cross-party and cross-nation energy strategy with a managed phase-out of fossil fuel production informed by climate science. • Develop robust climate adaptation policies and actions with a view to support already deprived areas. • Support the development of an integrated and sustainable travel network in the North East.
	<p>Data and measurement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a standardised classification of 'green' jobs since current industry and occupational classifications are not detailed enough. • Cooperation between industry and governments on developing data sets on the workforce; make data more available to the public. • Develop a place-based Just Transition data dashboard for tracking progress.
	<p>Policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerate policy- and law-making on energy, climate, and Just Transition – including the Offshore Energy Skills Passport. • Reform law and policy on public engagement in energy infrastructure projects in a way that is more conducive to empowering communities through early engagement and representation. • Strengthen local content requirements in the low-carbon energy industry.

Reflection points

- Aberdeen has had several 'transitions' spanning hundreds of years.
- The modern economy of the city (post 1970s) has been tightly coupled to the fluctuations of 1 economic sector – oil and gas.
- There were clear winners and losers over the decades.
- The future is uncertain – will the 'energy transition' save Aberdeen?
- Considering a JT must be holistic - not just focused on jobs (which are critical!) but on the 4 pillars.
- Just Transitions address social justice issues alongside economic development. 'No one is left behind'.
- Taking an integrated approach opens the door for better policy discussions and interventions.