



# Wind to light

MAY 19, 2020 | IN ART ARCADIA, LOCKDOWN RESIDENCIES | BY ADAM SÉBIRE

## from Wind to Light

from Adam Sébire



As guilty as I feel for finding silver linings in the Covid-19 cloud, my spirits whilst marooned have been buoyed by reports of two (related) phenomena this month.

One is the sound of nails being hammered into coal power's coffin: renewables officially have coal-dust on their hands. Even oil isn't looking too rosy; just ask the Norwegians, who had big plans to drill in the Arctic and off southern Australia. Endless articles have been written about the effects of less air pollution and numerous photographs taken of miraculously clear skies so I won't reprise here; it's a small glimmer of hope for a survivable climate in the future.

The other phenomenon has been the proliferation of bicycle lanes in many cities previously devoured by cars. (Peter Weir's 1974 horror film *The Cars that Ate Paris* has nothing to do with France, however the title aptly describes what happened to my former home, making Paris a dangerous, noxious hell to cycle. Today they have an extra 30km of temporary bicycle lanes thanks to social distancing infrastructure, with plans for 50km more.)

These two phenomena, linked by the move away from fossil fuel cabals to free and purer energy sources inspired me to combine my two favourite pastimes while marooned here on Utsira for today's video. One is cycling on the narrow road that connects the lighthouse to the rest of the island. With only 216 inhabitants the main time one spots a car is when the ferry unloads, making it a very pleasurable place to cycle indeed — except when the wind is gale force. My other favourite divertissement is gazing at the sparkling lighthouse lantern from the keeper's cottage. I'll write more about *the diamond* another time, but what delights me almost as much as its aesthetics is that the lighthouse is powered by the two wind turbines installed on the other coast of Utsira. There's something very poetic about the island's tallest structures being so-linked. Particularly as the modern lensed-lighthouse with its oil lantern is an emblem of the Industrial Revolution that rode on the back of fossil fuels (though its actual lenses were rotated by clockwork until the German army introduced generators in 1944).

Utsira's electric lantern had been decommissioned in 2004 and replaced with a small LED lamp sitting atop its roof. An inglorious end to its 160 year history to be sure. Ironically, this was the same year as the island's innovative wind-hydrogen-storage energy system was installed on the eastern shore. For 15 years the LED blinked reliably but prosaically. Then in August 2019 the local community decided to rekindle the fire in their hearts: the lantern and its 1st order fresnel lens made in Paris in 1890 was reconditioned and 175 years after the light was first lit it finally shone again. Only, now you might notice a slight greenish tinge to its light...

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