

## **KIRKINTILLOCH COMMUNITY COUNCIL (LSTCC) UOG COMMUNITY DISCUSSION**

- **Group:** The Community Council and the Peoples of Kirkintilloch.
- **Date of meeting:** Monday 15<sup>h</sup> May 2017, 7:30-9:30pm.
- **Location address / postcode:** St Marys Parish Church, Cowgate, Kirkintilloch G66 1JT.
- **Number of attendees:** 40.

### **(i) UOG Community Discussion Process**

1. The consultation began with a 30 minute introduction for residents following information slides set out in Scottish Government's Discussion Pack for large groups, and was introduced and presented by Bronagh Gallagher and Andy Lippok from Connecting Scotland (CS).
2. On the basis that residents new to the subject would benefit from a variety of UOG perspectives, a matrix was put together for the purpose. This showed the information summarising the research commissioned by Scottish Government (as set out in their handout cards in the Group Discussion Pack).
3. The presentation was followed by 70 minutes of two open circle discussions, one led by Bronagh Gallagher and the other led by Andy Lippok.
4. Outcomes were written up by the facilitators. [These were first verified for accuracy with councillors and participants, and then broadcast for residents who may have been unable to attend].

Precise details of the materials and process employed can be made available on request to [uogconsultation@charteringnetwork.org](mailto:uogconsultation@charteringnetwork.org).

### **(ii) Outcomes.**

#### **1. Overall, and in light of the available evidence, what do you think would be the main benefits, if any, of an unconventional oil and gas industry in Scotland?**

The main potential benefits put forward by residents, or emerging in discussion were:

**No benefits.** Around 58% participating residents who completed and placed post-its on a sheet perceived no potential benefits of UOG whatsoever to the community of Kirkintilloch.

**Jobs.** Of the potential benefits the impact on local employment was the biggest with just under 25% of participants stating that the possibility of new local jobs would be welcomed. However, in discussion, doubts were raised as to whether these jobs would be based locally or at other sites, for example, the processing point at Grangemouth. It was felt that the jobs could be short term, though it was stated that if young people could be trained up it could be worthwhile. In addition, it was felt that one of the main organisations to benefit from employment numbers was SEPA, due to their increased regulatory role. It was stated that the estimates indicate only 1400 jobs over the whole period, over the whole country which is too few to make impact. One participant suggested that INEOS have started to recruit people for high skilled jobs - in London. Following from this, there was a concern that skilled labour might be brought in from elsewhere with the only local jobs being unskilled, and that the skilled labour would leave the area after the job had finished. People indicated that they felt the potential benefit of some employment was outweighed by health risks to employees from fugitive gases and chemicals on the drilling pads. Also, that the UOG employment

may have a negative impact overall on jobs by preventing focus on renewable industry which employs more people over a longer term. Overall, while it was considered to be a potential benefit there were significant concerns over the quality, length and location of work to be a real benefit to Kirkintilloch.

**Energy Security** - The next biggest potential benefit was the impact on energy security which was highlighted by just under 9% of the participants. However, in discussion, it was disputed that this was a benefit in real terms. It was highlighted that the gas extracted will simply be fed into the grid and gone. It was highlighted that while it might act as possible feedstock for Grangemouth it would need to be compressed on site and then tankered out, leading to noise and pollution 24 hrs per day every day for years. It was felt that this was a short- term source of energy and not significant with the extracted fuel possibly being of poor and low calorific quality gas and no real value. While, it was suggested that this could be a transition source of energy it was also felt that it may distract and detract from the focus on renewables. It was also recognised that the impact on cheaper energy for wind turbines will only happen in the long term, which wouldn't be the case here.

### **Economic Benefits.**

**Local Economic Benefit** – One participant highlighted the potential of a Community Dividend scheme which has been outlined. It was felt that the 5% for the community could be re-invested in the roads and could operate in a similar way to the planning gains process. It was felt that 5% that is spoken of for landowners might only benefit a few people. In addition, one person recognised that local shareholders would benefit and this could benefit the local economy.

**National Economy** – One participant highlighted there would be an additional benefit to the national economy through increased tax revenue.

### **Other Benefits**

One other benefit identified was the removal of dangerous underground gas. This was not further discussed so it is not clear how this was seen to work.

## **2. Overall, and in light of the available evidence, what do you think would be the main risks or challenges, if any, of an unconventional oil and gas industry in Scotland?**

The main potential risks and challenges put forward by residents, or which emerged in discussion were:

### **Impacts on Mental and Physical Health.**

The potential impacts on health were identified by 22% of the participants and was, by far, the biggest concern residents had in relation to extraction of UOG in their area. It was highlighted that chemicals (individual and concoctions) and particulates/materials (Silica) escape during drilling and production and after decommissioning and that these are linked to health concerns. It was mentioned that reports from the USA are already showing health impacts on children and that there are concerns around incidences of asthma among children in the area. It was felt that the lack of baseline data and studies gives no basis for comparisons over time and that the delay between work beginning and noticing health impacts will mean it's already too late. It was highlighted that the UOG extraction will involve the movement of chemicals and materials into water table and rivers and out of old unmapped mines, which is a problem, particularly as Kirkintilloch is situated next to flood fields, which are intentionally designed to absorb flood water. It was suggested that the studies from the USA and Australian are from low populated areas and do not provide a suitable equivalent for

Central Scotland in assessing expected health impacts. Additional health concerns were raised in connection to the extraction process itself with emissions from compressors and trucks running 24hrs every day affecting air quality. It was felt that the impact of 24-hour noise from traffic and machines, particularly on local mental health was a concern. One participant highlighted the recent incidents in the past few days at Grangemonth and Longannet as an indication of how things can go wrong.

### **Environmental and Ecological concerns**

**Pollution** was the next biggest concern identified by 18% of participant through post-its. In discussion, the main issues that people highlighted were risks to air pollution with flaring off excess gas pressure and impacts to the environment both above and below ground with the latter being extensive, uncontrollable, unknown, and long-term. It was highlighted that SEPA have just completed a clean-up of rivers locally at great cost. The flood field nature of local land was highlighted and a question was asked of the impact of benzene, which is carcinogenic, on wildlife. It was felt that there would be air pollution from the number of trucks in the area. It was also felt that there were not good exemplars currently with recent oil spillage from the new Dakota pipeline in the USA.

Concern around the **impact on wildlife** and landscape represented many of the environmental concerns. It was highlighted that the area is home to nesting swans, otters, watervole (which is a protected species) and migratory species and there was a strong concern that their habitats would be disrupted simply through work happening. In addition, there was also the risk of leaks and accidents.

**Environmental economic impact** - Three participants felt that the impacts on the environment would have knock-on impact on the economy and the reputation of 'Brand Scotland' would be negatively affected simply through the association with fracking. This would cut across the food and drinks and tourism industries, which would be colossal and wholly unacceptable. The reputation could also discourage people from moving into the area consequently, impacting on house price as people may not be able to sell and leave the area. It was also felt that there could be potential brain drain from Scotland with those who want and can move away then doing so.

**Impact on local geology** - It was highlighted that the area is surrounded by old mine shafts. There were concerns about what would happen if drilling went into an existing shaft. It was noted that subsidence was already an issue. Concerns were raised that there is already a record of seismic activity in the area and that further work in the area could impact.

**Climate Change** - It was felt that this is moving away from the commitment to renewable energy.

**Regulation** – Although not identified in the post-its exercise in discussion regulation received a good degree of attention in discussion. It was highlighted that regulation often favours companies and not the local community. It was felt that there is a lack of accountability from off-shored and multiple shelled companies which makes it very difficult to track and make them responsible. Some participants felt that current regulation is ineffective and flawed and that people remember the safety assurances given in relation to Asbestos and Thalidomide, which then created disastrous impacts for decades later. It was noted that the impact of cuts on regulatory agencies budgets would detract from the available skills and expertise needed for effective and powerful regulation, monitoring and regulation. One participant highlighted that UK can be viewed as having the 'gold standard' for regulatory regime and yet many things still go very wrong. It was felt that there would need to be costly bonds in place and that these would not be repaid until well into and after the decommissioning period. A question was asked around whether the wellheads are insured.

**Transport and infrastructure** – There were concerns about the impacts of so many more trucks using minor and major roads on the infrastructure. It was highlighted that the roads around Kirkintilloch are very narrow and already act as a route for heavy vehicles travelling to Grangemouth. Therefore, the impact of additional heavy traffic was a big concern. There were questions around who would be responsible for paying for the extra costs of maintenance and repairs and whether there would be an impact on the flight paths around the 2 major airports in the region. It was acknowledged that the site chosen would make a difference to the impact on traffic.

One participant highlighted that as the impacts of UOG would span council boundaries it should not be left to local councils to make decisions which may result in different approaches, despite shared risk. It was felt that this was a national issue that needed a national approach.

**3. If you have any other comments on the issues as discussed in this consultation, please provide them here:**

This section forms the main substance of our consultation and revolves around the *OUR MESSAGE TO GOVERNMENT* questions (or what we think the Scottish Government need to take into account when considering the future of unconventional oil and gas development in Scotland).

There is one main message or question to the Scottish Government which arose from our consultation:

**Our community would not endorse the awarding of a social license for the UOG industry to operate in Kirkintilloch.** We feel that while there is the potential of a jobs boost for the local economy, in fact, previous experience shows that the quality, length, and nature of any employment created will not be significant enough to outweigh the risks. We feel that there are substantial and significant health risks to our local community. The delay between the beginning of work and the impact on health means that it will be too late to do anything about it once it has started. We remember previous public health disasters and notice that health concerns are emerging from research in other countries where this is already happening. We feel the unique characteristics of Kirkintilloch, which includes local wildlife and some protected species, the fact that it is sited next to flood fields and that disused mining infrastructure surrounds it, exacerbates any potential negative impacts around health and environment. We identify a potential, significant, negative impact on the reputation of 'Brand Scotland' internationally and many of the brands and products that are attached to it. We have positioned ourselves as world leaders in our renewables targets and climate change agenda and the awarding of licences for UOG would have an adverse impact on this reputation. We feel it is our responsibility to ensure that we do not leave a mess for our children to clean up and we should be aware of our legacy. **In reviewing all the material that has been presented to us and through our discussion a significant majority in Kirkintilloch would not grant a social licence for UOG extraction. We note that 3 people would consider a licence could be awarded if there were reassurances on regulation and health and safety. One person abstained as they believed there was not enough information to conclude either way.**