

## MILTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL UOG COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

- **Group:** The Community Council and the Peoples of Milton.
- **Date of meeting:** Monday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2017, 7-9pm.
- **Location address / postcode:** Colston Milton Parish Church, Egilsay Crescent, G22 7PF.
- **Number of attendees:** 30.

### (i) UOG Community Discussion Process

1. Leaflets notifying residents of the meeting were posted through most doors in Milton.
2. The consultation began with a 45 minute introduction for residents, including a presentation followed information slides set out in Scottish Government's Discussion Pack for large groups, which was presented by Bronagh Gallagher (Connecting Scotland) and Jamie McKenzie Hamilton (Community Chartering Network).

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), alongside summaries of legal submissions from the Dart Energy PLI. The matrix was included in the presentation, and as a handout.

3. The presentation was followed by 60 minutes of discussion where residents were split into two equal groups facilitated separately by Bronagh Gallagher and Jamie McKenzie Hamilton, wherein time was split roughly equally between the benefits and risks of UOG. In the final 15 minutes the two groups reconvened to share the outcomes of their discussions and to agree a collective message to Government.
4. Outcomes were written up by the facilitators. [These were first verified for accuracy with the community councillors and participants].
5. 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?**

Prior to the discussion residents were in unanimous agreement that UOG represented no potential benefits at all for Milton.

## **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 put forward by residents, or emerging in discussion were:

### **RISKS**

**Impacts on Public and Environmental Health.** The preeminent concern was the potential impact of local UOG extraction on public health. A close second was the possibility of environmental contamination by industrial, and natural, toxins and waste. It was noted that the UOG license area came right up to the boundary of the community, and therefore extraction could occur in close proximity to a densely-populated area. The feeling was leaks, spillages and fugitive chemicals and gases could contaminate the environment, food chain, and water supply. There were already significant doubts about the quality of the pipework in the area, which could allow UOG pollution to leach into local drinking water. The general view on the research commissioned by the Scottish Government was that it was too uncertain, or as summarised by one participant, 'there were too many unanswered questions to take the risks with our health'. Some thought more health research from gas fields elsewhere in the world would be 'useful'. Of greatest concern was what the unknown effects of UOG on health could be in the longer term. Residents stressed that North Glasgow already had the poorest health in Scotland, and was known for its high incidence of cancer and respiratory problems compared with other areas of the city. While this was attributed in part to the lack of facilities and high levels of deprivation, many also felt it to be an ongoing legacy of the area's industrial past. Some felt SEPA and planners must already be aware of the high levels of industrial contamination locally, but chose to overlook it when assessing new developments. In conclusion, all were in agreement that the potential risks of UOG to Milton's health and environment were unacceptable, particularly when added to existing levels of contamination, deprivation and ill health. Summarising feelings on the matter, one residents said, 'UOG would be another dollop to add to the suffering'.

**Hydrogeological Risks.** Half of the participants ranked the extent of local mine-workings among the top three potential risks of UOG. As someone put it, 'there are mines everywhere, all under Glasgow'. Many incidences of local subsidence were cited, including the collapse of the primary school sports field at Chirnsyde Primary school, and the recent appearance of 'holes opening up in a nearby field which people pass when they're walking their dogs'. One resident said that when building a new housing estate on Liddesdale road recently, the developers had to pump 'tonnes of concrete into the mine shaft in order to stabilise the foundations'. Others expressed worries about fugitive underground gases and toxins, which many thought were already a big contributor to the high levels of sickness locally. One resident who works in tunnel maintenance, stated 'we carry methane sensors always – after 30 years, seepage from the old mines is still a very real danger'. In short, it was generally agreed UOG would represent unaddressed, unknown and inherent risks to the community by destabilising a fragile subsurface environment, triggering seismic activity, and polluting via underground pathways. As one resident said, 'we have 6 high-rise blocks, each with 16 floors, we worry a lot about that'. Others pointed out that the area was peaty and prone to flooding, and that this would only exacerbate risks of accident and exposure. In short, there was consensus that UOG represented a significant and inherent risk to the local community on account of their hydrogeological context.

**Impacts of Traffic and Noise.** For over a third of participants, the local impacts of UOG traffic ranked high among their potential risks. They talked about how the local street layout was not well designed and was not coping well with traffic already. The area was heavily built-up, and included several bus routes, lorries servicing busy waterworks and industrial estate, and yet had only ‘very narrow streets’ and ‘two main ways in and out’. As one resident put it, ‘the traffic is already bad enough, when one route is affected there is a knock-on effect throughout’. Everyone was concerned about the impacts of adding heavy UOG traffic to the existing load on local congestion, and on physical and mental health. In the words of one participant, ‘every home is near a road, and the roads are tiny – we have noise through the night now, if it was to increase it would be unbearable’. Others stressed the effects ‘constant noise’ could have on local care home facilities, schools and crèches, and the danger of accidents involving children and wildlife. It was also noted that the roads had been repaired recently (albeit not well) at big disruption to residents, and that UOG traffic could cause rapid degradation at the public expense. In conclusion, all were in agreement that UOG traffic predictions were a ‘big deal’ for Milton, and would result in an intolerable cumulative impact on the community.

**Risk of Accidents.** Many worried about the increased possibility of accidents associated with hosting UOG activities. It was generally recognised that accidents do happen and so despite reassurances about safety, things could be expected to still go wrong. This was considered particularly prevalent given the population density of Milton and the presence of the high rises. Strong concerns were expressed about the dangers to children and young people of a large volume of heavy vehicles on the local roads, and many felt the safety of children should be the highest priority. Recent gas leaks in the area were also noted, as was the ongoing methane seepage from old mine-workings, and this led to speculation regarding ‘what would happen if there was a fire or accident on site?’ Some referred to the local 1913 Lambhill mining disaster, where 22 lives were lost in an underground gas explosion and fire. The general view was that the potential for accidents were more important to the community, than they were to the industry. As one resident put it, ‘for them, we are collateral damage’.

**Impacts on local Autonomy and Economy.** A recurring discussion theme was residents’ feelings of being excluded from planning decisions that mattered to the health and wellbeing of Milton. A statement acknowledged to reflect the general view was, ‘it feels like it’s already a done deal for Ineos –it’s always a done deal with big companies, no matter what we say or what we do’. Another resident proposed, ‘communities say no, but the decision keeps on going up the hierarchy till they get a yes – like what’s happening with the Airth inquiry’. A woman added, ‘we have our say but it never matters –public consultation is just a part of the process’. This perceived disregard and disrespect for the community was seen as something that carried through into the way developers treated them, termed ‘bullying tactics’, and which residents expected from UOG operators. For illustration, they referred to when the water board recently installed some new sewage pipes, and ‘we were told to do what you’re told, or else’, or ‘they blocked routes without telling us, leaving grandchildren and old people having to walk home the long way’.

Moreover, the general view was that to force UOG upon Milton was to add to the financial burden of a community already classified among the most deprived areas in Scotland and Europe. This was contrasted with the ‘investment of millions’ expected to go into the industry from the public sector, and the big returns ‘for the few’. Many of the personal questions participants wanted to ask the

Scottish Government related to details of the compensation they would receive if there was harm to their property, or to cover rising home insurance costs. In discussion, one resident said, ‘if Ineos don’t think property values will fall, then why don’t they buy my house and assume that risk?’ Another said, ‘what two questions do insurance companies ask you upfront –have you had subsidence and are you near a floodplain?– yes and yes, and your premium’s through the roof!’ People spoke angrily about how local poverty was a vulnerability which big business could play upon, a tactic they agreed was ‘shameful’. In the words of one resident, ‘if you haven’t got two bob to rub together, and someone says we’ll give you this money if UOG goes ahead, there’s some around here who would be willing to go for it –anyone would in their situation’. A woman responded, ‘I wouldn’t do it, no matter how much’. Many expressed feelings of disempowerment at the idea UOG would go ahead. As one put it, ‘you’d want to move on, but you couldn’t sell your house, you’d be unable to escape’, and another ‘what about us in the council houses –we’re cornered, we can’t do anything’.

**Risks to Community and Environmental Regeneration.** Much of the community’s frustration and defiance around the idea that UOG might be ‘imposed’ on them, seemed related to a consensus that Milton was heading in a positive direction. It was noted people were now moving into the area because, as one resident put it, ‘it’s good value for money, and there are opportunities’. Another said, ‘I chose to live here, and intend to make it a better place for my children’. For all present, the recovery of the local natural environment was seen as being central to this improvement, with over a third ranking harm to wildlife among UOG’s three top potential risks. People talked about the enjoyment and value the local woodlands, wildlife reserve and canal bring to the community. In the words of one participant, ‘the environment keeps getting better, there’s been a huge increase in wildlife since I’ve lived here’. Another said, ‘it’s like having a zoo at your back door –foxes, birds, horses– there were two deer walking down the main street the other day, everyone was on their phones to each other and taking the children down to see them’. There were very big concerns that the impact of UOG on house prices and insurance, and the natural environment, would discourage incomers, investment and commitment to improvement at a time when it was needed most, thus reversing these processes of local regeneration. Nevertheless, some spoke passionately about how they would never permit this to happen. As one lady put it, ‘we fought hard when they shut down our primary school –it’s why we still have our playing fields– and we’ll do it again!’

**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)*.

We have agreed on one key message to the Scottish Government as the result of our consultation:

**On the basis that we believe UOG represents no benefit, and significant risk, to our Milton, we absolutely and unreservedly reject the social license for operations in our community council area.** We have reflected on what UOG could mean for Milton, and have reached the strong consensus that it represents no benefits, only risks. Our community already experiences among the highest levels of poverty and sickness in Scotland and Europe, and believe this is attributable in large part to the

legacy of our industrial past. In recent times we feel Milton has turned a corner, as is evidenced by the number of incomers who are choosing to make this their home, the increase in local wildlife, and the growing local commitment to improvement. We believe strongly that UOG extraction constitutes a material threat to this progress, and would be an unfair and unethical burden considering the unique challenges we face as a community. While we sincerely want to believe the Scottish Government will hear us on this matter, our faith in proper governance has been sorely tested by past experience, which causes us to expect powerful interests will again be prioritised over our needs. Nevertheless, we also wish to make it known that we're fed up with exploitation, and would fight to safeguard what we value from the UOG industry should it be green-lighted. Indeed, we were in 100% agreement that we would never support any political party which permitted UOG development, and would switch existing party allegiances on that basis if disappointed. In short, we absolutely and unreservedly reject UOG extraction in the community council area of Milton, and ask that our position has been understood and accepted by the Scottish Government.