

## Submission by RAFF - Residents Action on Fylde Fracking on the Community Impacts of Prospective Shale Gas Exploration

### **Stress caused by engaging in the planning process**

The only effective way we have been able to engage in the process is via the local authority planning system and this has been far from satisfactory. Speakers at the planning meeting and the subsequent Inquiry into the decision by Lancs County Council were under time constraints. The initial jubilation at the Lancs decision to ban fracking was replaced by trepidation as the Inquiry approached. Speakers at the Enquiry were faced by a Barrister employed by Cuadrilla and the combination of these pressures led to at least ten people breaking down and crying. Others were visibly upset.

### **Health effects of community disruption**

A local Councillor reported that in all her years as Councillor she had never before been contacted by so many people who were worried about the change and destruction that would affect their village. They all were stressed by the situation. She also said that she felt powerless to reassure them as the decisions were out of her hands. She broke down when giving evidence at the Inquiry.

The precise level of risk to health cannot be determined with certainty because: a) there is incomplete knowledge about the toxicity of a number of potential pollutants; b) SGP is an industrial process for which there are limited data and incomplete understanding. All this uncertainty is in itself causing stress to the Community. It has been documented by Dr William Bird MBE and others that stress causes a build up of visceral fat which causes immense damage to the body. Chronic stress disrupts nearly every system in the body. It can raise blood pressure, suppress the immune system, increase the risk of heart attack and stroke, contribute to infertility, and speed up the aging process.

### **'Mental anguish' caused by the attitude of the company and the authorities.**

Cuadrilla have employed a PR company to fend off concerns. They have given money to various local groups to improve their image. Residents attending their roadshows /information sessions felt questions were ignored fobbed off or dismissed by people who did not understand the fracking process. Cuadrilla also employed a security firm and men were employed in large numbers. Villagers reported feeling intimidated by Cuadrilla's security firm . Men were employed in large numbers in the local fields, approached vehicles, approached children playing in the woods, patrolled in dark fields in vehicles at night and brought a sense of menace which led villagers to feel intimidated.

There was a heavy security presence at the inquiry despite there never having been any sign of trouble at the Planning Meeting or Inquiry. The length of time this has been going on has also caused stress.

### **Place identities**

It was repeated many times at the Inquiry that people had moved to the area or built up their rural business in the area because of its quiet rural nature. There would be a disastrous effect particularly on Livery, Kennels, Farriers and Honey businesses. These pre-existing economic activities determine the extent to which the social, cultural and economic disruption caused by SGP will impact negatively on local communities.