

Cheshire Pension Fund MEMBERS FORUM

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This year a number of local government pensioners in Cheshire, Warrington, and Halton have set up their own CPF Members Forum.

- We believe that our Cheshire Pension Fund can and must invest in a far more socially responsible manner.
- We do have an AGM for members, or web pages for member discussions.
- We will campaign for more openness by our fund, and more local investing.

Among our concerns is the scale of CPF investing in Fracking Industries, identified by the recent Friends of the Earth study, “DIVEST FRACKING – How UK councils are banking on dirty gas” (Sept 2018). <https://gofossilfree.org/uk/divest-fracking/>

This shows that Cheshire Pension Fund invests over £46 million in fracking companies.

Total fund size:	£4,167,287,023
Total fracking investments:	£46,902,864
Direct investments:	£36,600,836
Estimated indirect investments:	£10,302,028
% Invested in fracking:	1.13%

Top fracking investments

Exxon	£7,715,980
Chevron	£5,319,351
BP	£4,122,593
Shell	£3,220,858
Shell	£2,982,229

Nationally, FOE highlight that in total UK councils are investing more than £9bn of public money in fracking companies through their pension funds, yet many councils have voted against fracking in their own areas.

Cheshire councillors and residents have opposed fracking, or shale gas applications, by IGAS at Ellesmere Port. The original application was rejected by CWAC councillors this year.

Now IGAS has submitted an appeal to The Secretary of State to override the planning decision here. The whole of the Cheshire Corridor is of interest to fracking companies, and could set a precedent.

We argue that we might invest in renewable energy here in Cheshire, and in other places around the UK, which would ensure a safe and viable future for our residents, and a good return for the pension fund.

We invite pensioners from the fund, and councillors from towns and parishes in Cheshire concerned at this level of fracking company investment to email cpfmembersforum@gmail.com

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. In Spring 2018 in Cheshire, concerned pensioners of the Cheshire Pension Fund, for local government in Cheshire, Warrington and Halton, formed a Members Forum.
2. Cheshire Pension Fund <http://www.cheshirepensionfund.org/> covers over 93,000 members, from over 250 councils and local government organisations, including Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, Warrington MBC, Halton MBC, and their housing associations, academies, parish councils, police staff, schools, and others in the wider Cheshire area.
3. We say that CPF should support our communities in Cheshire, Warrington, and Halton, and also the Northern Powerhouse. We think that our fund should invest in our communities for the future, not only short-term investing for profit. We would like to see Cheshire Pension Fund invest in our well-being, and move beyond solely fiduciary duty, and to consider local factors when investing.
4. We think that Cheshire Pension Fund allows the London investment advisers to make investment decisions and charge high fees and bonuses. We say that these advisers do not consider wider factors because our fund give little guidance, except for high returns. This allows investment managers to choose where our funds end up, which may go some way to explain why Cheshire Pension Fund ever had an investment in Wonga in 2013.
5. New forthcoming pension regulations will focus on the roles of Trustees and how much they understand of wider ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) factors. These have recently become centre stage in financial and pension management. Examples are:
 - • Environmental: resource depletion, including water waste and pollution, deforestation.
 - • Social: working conditions, including slavery and child labour; health and safety; employee relations and diversity; ageing populations; social unrest; local communities, including indigenous communities; and income inequality.
 - • Governance: executive pay; bribery and corruption; board diversity and structure.
6. Currently, we have little idea how much support among Cheshire local government pensioners there may be on fracking divestment, and their views on other ESG issues such as Climate Change, Tax Havens, Tobacco, or FOBTs.
7. We would like to see more openness by Cheshire Pension Fund and the Trustees, with an AGM, open web pages for member discussions, and for the fund to actively seek feedback and opinions from members. This does not happen now.

For further information on the Members Forum, please contact

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