

- Wednesday 29th April 2015

## **New gold rush in Aberdeenshire village Towie**



**Picture: Robert Perry**

**ALISTAIR MUNRO**

00:04Saturday 25 April 2015 11:25Friday 24 April 2015

**TOWIE is famous as an acronym for the reality TV show The Only Way Is Essex, and its “stars” made a fortune from its notoriety. Now a tiny Scottish village – actually called Towie – is set to strike gold in its own way, and is potentially worth billions of pounds.**

A Turkish mining giant has joined forces with a Muir of Ord firm, based in the Highlands, which has been exploring land at the little-known hamlet, 30 miles west of Aberdeen, for the last two years.

## **“I wondered why no one was mining gold in a big way”**

*Gavin Berkenheger*

GreenOre Gold’s managing director, Gavin Berkenheger, hopes the development could mirror a massive project which is taking place in Northern Ireland, whereby more than 3.5 million ounces of gold is planned to be exploited over four years.

The price of gold has risen in recent years and, on the global market yesterday an ounce was worth £788.01 – making it a billion pound industry.

Mr Berkenheger, a 31-year-old Aberdeen University geology graduate, believes real gold could replace the fortunes made from “black gold” – the oil and gas industry during its heyday when it pumped billions of pounds into the British economy.

He said the farmland site he is exploring is part of the same geological “supergroup” as a massive gold deposit across the Irish Sea. The Dalradian supergroup – thought to have formed more than 500 million years ago – runs from Northern Ireland in a north-easterly direction across Scotland, ending up in Aberdeenshire.

The deal GreenOre Gold struck with Kozo Altin Isletmeri, based in Turkey, will provide additional funding which he says will take the exploration forward.

Mr Berkenheger, who worked on the Dalradian project in 2007, said: “The Dalradian supergroup runs from Ireland through Scotland in a north-easterly direction, into Aberdeenshire.

“I started looking along this geological track and sure enough there have been historical references throughout Scotland. I just took a look at a few of these areas and eventually found this location in Aberdeenshire. It had all the right characteristics and deposits.

“I wondered why no one was mining gold in a big way as Scotland has huge potential, but the country has focused too much on oil and gas.

“This area has all the right hallmarks of a major deposit under the surface to mirror Dalradian gold in Northern Ireland, which has a 3.5 million ounce deposit. We hope to repeat this success.”

Mr Berkenheger hopes continued investment, such as with Kozo, will lead to further projects, adding: “I plan to develop along this track.”

GreenOre already has a licence from the Crown Estate to search for gold in the undulating hills between Rhynie and Aboyne, and Mr Berkenheger said: “GreenOre Gold is delighted to partner with Kozo, a major gold producer.

“They have seen what we have got and they are happy that this area we have in Aberdeenshire has potential for a large deposit like we found in Northern Ireland. This further supports our belief in the potential for major gold deposits in Scotland.” Kozo, which

operates five working gold mines in Turkey, will fund exploration activities and will take over 60 per cent of a joint venture.

Plans for expansion in exploration are being submitted to Aberdeenshire Council, and a spokesman said they would “wait to see if it comes about”.

