



Department for
Energy Security
& Net Zero

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Rt Hon Greg Clark MP
Chair, Science, Innovation and Technology Select
Committee
House of Commons
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8 May 2024

Dear Greg,

I am writing to inform you that today we will launch a scoping consultation for the Fusion Energy National Policy Statement.

Fusion energy has the potential to deliver low-carbon, safe, secure energy and developers, investors, and the wider industry need to be able to plan with confidence to commercialise fusion technology. The UK's STEP (Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production) programme seeks to develop and build in the UK by 2040 a prototype fusion power plant. Private fusion companies in the UK and overseas are also quickly developing demonstrator fusion facilities. To deliver these facilities, sites for fusion energy facilities will need to be identified and construction started this decade.

If the UK is to maintain its global leadership in fusion and capture the environmental, economic and social benefits of fusion, the Government needs to create a stable environment that supports and encourages its development.

In 2022, the Government published a response to the Fusion Regulation Green Paper confirming that fusion will be regulated under a different framework than fission due to its lower hazard. With this different policy approach, the Government also identified a fusion specific National Policy Statement (NPS) as essential to providing clarity to developers and streamlining the planning process for fusion, aligning fusion with other energy generating technologies.

This is necessary not only to provide certainty for developers but also to align fusion with other complex energy generating technologies which local authorities will lack the expertise to assess in the near future.

The consultation we have published begins the process towards designation a NPS for fusion energy (EN-8), including seeking views on the broad policy proposals for this NPS and high-level planning criteria.

These broad policy proposals are:

- Open-sited – a developer-led approach underpinned by site criteria rather than identifying sites. This approach would allow siting in more communities across the UK subject to local support.
- Technology inclusive – the UK's Fusion Strategy committed to supporting all fusion technologies and so the NPS will cover all fusion technologies.

- Output agnostic – amend the Planning Act 2008 so that all fusion energy facilities in England will be Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects independent of capacity of thermal or electrical output. This approach was proposed in the New Nuclear NPS consultation so any amendments to legislation will be coordinated.

This consultation relates to the exercise of powers in England and Wales. The Planning Act 2008 and system of Nationally Significant Infrastructure consenting do not apply to Scotland or Northern Ireland. The Wales Act 2017 gives Welsh Ministers the responsibility to consent the construction of power stations of a capacity up to and including 350MW.

Alongside the publication of this consultation, we will publish a consultation on the scope of an Appraisal of Sustainability and Habitats Regulation Assessment. These will inform considerations of the environmental impacts of fusion development.

I am also delighted to say that we will soon launch the procurement for engineering and construction partners for STEP. From 22 May, we will be considering bids from the private sector to work alongside UKAEA, under the clear direction of UK Industrial Fusion Solutions, to design and build STEP and pursue the clean, safe energy that fusion promises.

I will place a copy of the scoping consultation for the Fusion Energy National Policy Statement in the Libraries of the House.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Claire Coutinho', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

RT HON CLAIRE COUTINHO MP
Secretary of State for Energy Security & Net Zero