

STEP closer to naming site of first fusion energy power plant

- UKAEA's STEP programme will play a key role in fusion energy of the future and create thousands of highly skilled jobs
- Location of prototype fusion energy power plant to be confirmed later this year; community engagement events run until Feb 10
- Fusion energy is crucial in addressing climate change through a safe, efficient and low-carbon energy supply

Residents and other local stakeholders from the shortlisted regions across the UK are invited to provide feedback on new proposals for a prototype fusion energy power plant, which may be built in their area.

A series of virtual community forum events will take place online in each of the five selected regions from January 26 to February 10.

STEP, or Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production, is a UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) programme seeking to pave the way for the development of commercial power plants, capable of supplying a limitless supply of low carbon, clean energy. It will also showcase how a future fusion power station will be operated and maintained.

UKAEA engineers and scientists involved in the first-of-its-kind project will engage with residents and stakeholders from the five shortlisted sites to explain the benefits of safe, sustainable fusion energy, and how the proposed prototype power plant will create thousands of highly skilled jobs and attract other high-tech industries to its host region.

The STEP site will be selected by the Secretary of State at the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. The final decision on the successful site is expected around the end of 2022. UKAEA will make recommendations based on a set of criteria, including support from the local community and the potential for socio-economic benefits in that locality. The community forums will take place in the five shortlisted sites as follows:

- Ardeer, North Ayrshire (Jan 26, 6-8pm) • Moorside, Cumbria (Jan 31, 6-8pm)
- Goole, East Yorkshire (Feb 2, 6-8pm) • West Burton, Nottinghamshire (Feb 8, 6-8pm) • Severn Edge, Gloucestershire (Feb 10, 6-8pm)

Tristram Denton, Head of Commercial and Programme Development for STEP, said: "STEP is not just of strategic importance to UKAEA, but to the national and global efforts to harness fusion technology in the fight against climate change. While it's still early days, we anticipate that the host region will become a global hub for a wide range of technological and scientific expertise, leading to massive economic opportunities.

"The UK government is committed to net zero by 2050 and fusion is one part of the long-term solution, alongside a continued increase in energy from renewable sources like wind and solar power. The recent COP26 climate

conference highlighted the need to push harder and faster, and STEP takes us ever closer to making fusion a reality.”

Stakeholder and community engagement is one part of STEP’s site selection process, enabling UKAEA to raise awareness of the programme in each of the five shortlisted locations and gather initial feedback.

Each community forum is open to all and will include a presentation on the programme, details on the proposals and an open forum for questions and discussion. This will enable attendees to learn more and provide feedback, which will form an important part of the assessment process as the team develops its final recommendations.

Residents and other local stakeholders from the shortlisted regions can find out more by registering for the individual sessions which will take place via Microsoft Teams on Eventbrite.