

Energy policy briefings ensure better collaboration with UK academics

Press release

The Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is working with the OIT and UKRI to provide energy policy briefings for UK academics.



The Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is working with the Open Innovation Team (OIT) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) to provide energy policy briefings for UK academics.

Briefings will take place from mid February on:

- **Built environment, 3pm, 23 Feb 2022** – looking at priorities for accelerating the journey to net zero buildings – policy technologies and enablers required to improve energy efficiency and grow markets for low carbon heating.
- **Energy security, 3pm, 2 March 2022** – reviewing the drivers and challenges shaping energy security in the UK.
- **Energy storage, April TBC** – the development and use of new energy storage technologies for supporting renewable energy and the UK's energy system.

These briefings will give academics more detail about energy policy priorities and create opportunities for them to engage with policymakers on energy policy research.

These briefings are part of an ongoing process to improve collaboration between academics and officials.

If you are a UK academic or researcher you can register for the event [here](#)

To find out more about these briefings please contact enquiries@openinnovation.gov.uk

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[Applications for the Chair of the England Species Reintroduction Task Force opens](#)

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has today (Monday 24 January) opened applications for the Chair of the England Species Reintroduction Task Force.

The government committed in the 25 Year Environment Plan to provide opportunities for the reintroduction of formerly native species where there are clear environment and socio-economic benefits.

We have consistently supported the reintroduction of recently lost former native species, when it has been appropriate to do so, such as the large blue butterfly, red kite, and pool frog, which have been successfully reintroduced.

To further support this, the England Species Reintroduction Task Force will provide independent advice on species reintroductions in England.

This technical advisory group will bring together statutory bodies, experts and stakeholders to provide a collective evidence-based view on potential species for conservation translocation and reintroduction in England, as well as promoting good practice aligned to our published Reintroductions Code.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

“We are absolutely committed to driving forward action to protect nature and improve biodiversity.

“The England Species Reintroductions Task Force will provide important technical advice to Defra on potential species reintroductions in England. This will help support the delivery of our ambitions for nature recovery through the strengthening of the evidence base that underpins the reintroduction of native species.

“I look forward to seeing the work of the Task force and how we can accelerate progress in this area.”

Tony Juniper, Chair of Natural England, said:

“We welcome the formation of the England Species Reintroductions Task Force, as species reintroductions are an important part of Nature recovery. Natural England looks forward to supporting the Task force and its new chair with technical expertise including on licensing as part of our statutory role ”

We are now looking for a chairperson for this Group, initially holding a 3-year term.

The advert for the role can be found online [here](#)

The closing date for applications is 21st February 2022.

[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.

[Northern Ireland Protocol and UK-EU relations: UK and EU joint statement, 24 January](#)

Press release

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss and European Commission Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič held talks on the Northern Ireland Protocol and UK-EU relations.



Foreign Secretary Liz Truss and Vice President of the European Commission Maros Sefcovic continue talks on the Northern Ireland Protocol in Brussels.

UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss and Commission Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič held their second meeting in Brussels on 24 January.

The meeting took place in a constructive atmosphere with the aim to advance the talks. They agreed that officials would meet again this week, with the Principals taking stock at political level next week. They also agreed that the EU-UK Joint Committee would meet in the course of February.

They reaffirmed their shared desire for a positive EU-UK relationship underpinned by our shared belief in freedom and democracy and cooperation on common global challenges.

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[MP visits A63 Castle Street improvements to see how National Highways is building back better](#)

Emma Hardy, MP for Hull West and Hessle, toured the site of National Highways' A63 Castle Street improvement on 21 January to see progress being made and the difference the project is making to the local community.

In recent months, work has focused on removing various underground pipes in the way of new infrastructure, continuing construction of the main underpass and getting ready for the Porter Street bridge installation.

National Highways Project Manager Frances Oliver said:

Work is progressing extremely well and we are on track to install the new pedestrian and cycle footbridge at Porter Street in a few months' time.

This important upgrade is a great example of how building back better will support economic growth through investment in infrastructure. The A63 Castle Street scheme will bring plenty of benefits, not just to the people of Hull, but to the wider economy. It will reduce congestion, improve safety and create better connections.

Ms Hardy also heard how National Highways and delivery partner Balfour Beatty are creating a lasting "local first" legacy, helping charities, businesses, suppliers, schools and colleges throughout the life of the scheme.

The project is engaging with young people on employment and skills activities, promoting STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) as a career.

Staff have engaged with over 1,700 individuals and delivered STEM based activities to more than 200 local students from schools, colleges and the University of Hull, including a full day of activities for 45 students from a local Special Educational Needs and Disabilities school.

The project team have also taken part in a Women in Manufacturing and Engineering pilot to encourage more women into STEM careers and are recruiting apprentices from the local area.

They've also raised money for charities including Macmillan Cancer Support, Anthony Nolan and blood cancer charity DKMS. Related to this they've generated 65 new donor sign ups to the stem cell register. They've also donated items to a local foodbank and women's refuge as well as materials and staff time for an episode of the BBC's DIY SOS.

Speaking after her visit, Ms Hardy said:

I was pleased to see the good progress being made at the site and hear that the project is running to its original schedule. The improvements will make a huge difference to area and National Highways' continued commitment to developing education opportunities and to supporting local community groups is highly commendable.

The A63 Castle Street improvement started construction in 2020 and is due to complete in 2025. A new junction will be created by lowering the level of the A63 at the Mytongate junction. Ferensway and Commercial Road will cross the A63, creating a split-level junction. Between Princes Dock Street and Market Place the eastbound carriageway will be widened to three lanes. A new bridge will be built over the A63 at Porter Street.

Members of the public should contact the National Highways customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Journalists should contact the National Highways press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.