



UK Atomic Energy Authority  
Culham Science Centre  
Abingdon  
Oxfordshire  
OX14 3DB

21 February 2022

Dear Prof Ian Chapman,

### **GW4 Support for Severn Edge STEP Siting Opportunity**

As Director of the GW4 Alliance, I am delighted to offer our fullest support for the Severn Edge STEP Fusion proposal. The UKAEA's mission to deliver STEP, a world first fusion energy plant, is the kind of research-led project that will demand the very best skills. This will include pushing forward the boundaries of science and engineering. The proposal offers an unprecedented opportunity to engage with a unique breath of skills and research capacity within the GW4 Alliance.

The GW4 Alliance connects four of the most research-intensive and innovative universities in the UK: Bath, Bristol, Cardiff, and Exeter. The Alliance works with industrial partners, policymakers, and civil society organisations to address global societal and industrial challenges. Through GW4, our researchers, technicians, and students have access to four of the most research-intensive and innovative universities in the UK, benefiting from [world-class facilities](#), shared [cutting-edge equipment](#) and [development and funding](#) opportunities. As the only research alliance to collaborate across England and a devolved administration, we connect R&D excellence and play a key role in strengthening the wider region and levelling-up agenda. Our flagship Building Communities programme, which develops initiatives at scale, has a 20:1 total return on investment for every £1 we invest.

The Severn Edge STEP Fusion proposal signifies a critical innovation opportunity for the GW4 region. The GW4 alliance fosters collaboration across disciplines between academics working at the forefront of their fields with the aim of achieving a positive impact on the world. The GW4 Alliance is committed to pursuing research that helps the world achieve a net-zero carbon economy faster. We support this through our research focus on **Accelerating to Net Zero** (<https://gw4.ac.uk/net-zero/>) and **The GW4 Climate Alliance** (<https://gw4climate.com>).

The Accelerating to Net Zero transformative programme brings together GW4 researchers, government, industry, and communities to better understand the challenges and priorities faced by different sectors in our region, and to identify opportunities to collaborate on innovative solutions. GW4 will accelerate to Net Zero by reaching **further**, beyond our region and beyond traditionally distinct disciplines; working **faster**, identifying technologies that can be adopted quickly and accelerating innovation where long-lasting, sustainable change is required; and enabling **fairer** and equitable transitions, through co-creation and tackling issues in the context of the whole system and ensuring social justice is at the centre of these transformations.

The GW4 Alliance is uniquely placed and our collective research expertise brings collaborations in energy, through the Supergen Energy Networks (SEN) and Offshore Renewable Energy Hub and the [FLEXIS](#)

programme demonstrating novel energy systems and concepts. Combined with expertise in propulsion ([IAAAPS](#)) and clean mobility ([Centre for Future Clean Mobility](#)), the High Value Manufacturing Catapult National Composites Centre ([NCC](#)), and a whole system approach integrating road, rail and aerospace through the Decarbonising Transport through Electrification ([DTE](#)) Network+. We use our academic, policy, and global industry networks to maximise information sharing and identify further innovation opportunities.

We are committed to developing the researchers of tomorrow and building a highly skilled workforce, from our GW4 Doctoral Training Programmes, the professional development of our technical staff, and our annual GW4 Crucible programme – which provides hands-on training and mentoring to develop collaborative research leaders of the future.

We believe that siting STEP at Severn Edge would place it firmly in the heart of an academic cluster with a unique breath of skills and research capacity. Combined, this would increase the chances of successfully delivering STEP and enhance the region's own drive for clean growth and a net-zero world. I wish the team every success in their application and look forward to hearing the outcome in due course.

Sincerely,



Dr Joanna Jenkinson MBE  
GW4 Director