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Dear Cathryn,

Regulatory Horizons Council Report on Fusion Energy Regulation: Government Response

As you know, the Government has over the last three years been working closely with regulators and technical and safety experts to consider what would be a proportionate regulatory approach for fusion energy. The Regulatory Horizons Council's report on this topic, published in June 2021, was an enormously helpful contribution to the topic. My predecessor wrote to you in June 2021 committing to respond after BEIS had completed its consultation on proposals for a regulatory framework for fusion energy.

The Government has today, 20th June 2022, published a summary of the responses received to that consultation and our proposed next steps [<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/towards-fusion-energy-proposals-for-a-regulatory-framework>]. **I am therefore writing to you today to provide a formal response to the RHC's report to confirm that the Government agrees with the broad conclusions of the report. This is provided overleaf.** Thank you for your patience up to this point.

I agree with the RHC that the consultation on our fusion regulation proposals should be just the start of wider public engagement, to help public understanding of fusion in general as well as how it is regulated. This goal was affirmed in our Fusion Strategy published last year – and I hope that the RHC can support BEIS as we take this forward.

Thank you again for the RHC's hugely valuable work on fusion regulation. I look forward to the RHC's work in other exciting areas of innovation and technology.

The Government's response to the RHC's report and recommendations

The Government is very grateful for the RHC's report on fusion regulation. The report has played an important part in the Government's considerations. Moreover, it has helped to raise the profile of the UK's work on fusion regulation around the world and influence the growing global debate on this subject.

The Government agrees with the broad conclusions of the RHC's report. The Government's position on the recommendations which remain outstanding is below.

- *The RHC recommends that the UK champions the way for a non-fission approach, by setting out and consulting on a bold, forward-looking vision of how HSE and EA could lead and evolve the regulatory approach for STEP.*
- *[taken from the RHC Supplementary Report which specifically looked at Commercial Fusion] The Council maintains that its recommendations for the STEP fusion project also hold for commercial fusion: the evolution and continuation of the current regulatory approach with HSE regulating on safety and EA on the environment.*

The Government accepted these recommendations and conducted such a consultation in 2021. Following its consideration of the responses received to that consultation, the Government agrees with the RHC that *“STEP does not require a different regulatory approach to that which has worked well for fusion to date. The EA and HSE provide the proportionate framework for regulation of STEP commensurate with the hazards presented by the technology.”* The Government agrees that a fission-based regulatory approach could “risk being disproportionate”. The Government's response to its consultation sets out how the Government intends for the regulatory framework for fusion to evolve.

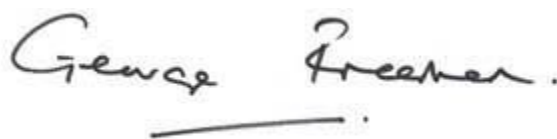
- *The RHC also found that more could be done to clarify, both to the industry and the public, what this regulatory approach is, how it will be enforced and how it could be applied to future fusion projects. **It recommends that a joint guidance document is produced to cover this by EA, HSE and BEIS.***

Responses received to the consultation noted how enhanced guidance would benefit the fusion industry. **Informed by the RHC's recommendation, the Government is undertaking a programme of work with the regulators to consider how best to improve guidance in this area.**

- *The RHC also recommended that the Government “work with HSE, EA and UKAEA to consider and take action on potential upskilling that may be needed as STEP and other fusion projects develop further; and how best to cooperate with other regulators internationally”.*

The Government agrees with the RHC on this important issue and has implemented this recommendation. BEIS is working closely with the HSE and the EA as the regulators, supported by UKAEA's technical experts where appropriate.

Yours sincerely,



GEORGE FREEMAN MP
Minister for Science, Research and Innovation