

One thing we have learnt this week – modular nuclear power

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Do we need modular nuclear power? A survey has come out this

week saying most people [do not want to live](#) next to a modular nuclear power station. The idea of modular nuclear power is that you build lots of small reactors with outputs somewhere in the order of 300-440MWp. There are a number of supposed advantages. By building nuclear reactors en masse then you get economies of scale. Some people (naive in my view) think they could be flown into disaster areas (see recent news for examples) to provide emergency power. Some designs claim to be passive and would require either less staff - or wait for it none at all! The last advantage and why people such as George Monbiot (and I think the British Government) support them and have provided £250 million for initial research is that they claim they could use up the nuclear waste at Sellafield. OK now its time to get real. The problems that nuclear power have are not going to be wiped out by modular nuclear power plants. The same issues of cost and waste still exist. In the link above its reckoned the cost could be as low as 6p/unit by 2028 with production of 40-70 units. However with the cutting the edge of offshore wind coming in at less than this now much less in ten years time then even with "mass production" nuclear still cannot compete on cost. The next problem is where to put them. When the government started looking at new nuclear they did consider new green field sites. The public's concern arises from the suspicion that these small reactors are going to be planted in urban areas. New non-nuclear sites such as old coal fired power stations are under consideration. The final problem is that many of the designs, if not most are generation IV designs which are untried and untested. The golden rule of nuclear is cost rise as delays set in. Building small is unlikely to change this. Renewables coupled with cheap energy storage have won the day and the sooner the nuclear dreamers realise this the better. PS the mock up picture on the lobbying organisations website does not look that small a building anyway. Neil

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