

PRESS RELEASE

Thorium: No Silver Bullet for Nuclear Industry

A new Briefing, authored by Oliver Tickell, explodes the idea that nuclear reactors using thorium as fuel might provide a viable alternative to reactors using uranium.

This has become something of a rallying cry for those who recognise that conventional nuclear technologies are in terminal decline – including a baffling number of environmentalists who have come to believe that thorium could provide some kind ‘silver bullet’ solution to the nuclear industry’s woes.

They are deluded.

This Briefing (“Thorium: Not ‘green’, not ‘viable’, and not likely”) is the latest in a series of Briefings issued by Tom Burke, Tony Juniper, Jonathon Porritt and Charles Secrett to demonstrate that there is no conceivable economic case to be made for any new nuclear power stations in the UK – using either uranium or thorium.

The Briefing highlights the many drawbacks facing thorium reactors, including

- the very high costs of technology development, construction and operation;
- marginal benefits for a thorium fuel cycle over the currently utilised uranium / plutonium fuel cycles;
- serious nuclear weapons proliferation hazards: the molten salt reactor (MSR) technology promoted for thorium could be used to produce fissile uranium and plutonium at very high purities well above ordinary ‘weapons grade’;
- the danger of both routine and accidental releases of radiation, mainly from continuous ‘live’ fuel reprocessing in MSRs;
- the very long lead time for significant deployment of MSRs of the order of half a century – rendering it irrelevant in terms of addressing current or medium term energy supply needs.

In issuing the Briefing from Oliver Tickell, Jonathon Porritt commented:

“Advocates of Thorium as an alternative fuel for any future nuclear reactors are simply clutching at straws. It’s fantastical to suppose that a government that can no longer justify the massive waste of tax payer’s money involved in conventional nuclear power is going to sign up to a huge new R&D programme into ‘an alternative’ that would be just as costly, just as complex and just as irrelevant in terms of meeting this country’s pressing, low-carbon and energy security objectives”.

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Twitter: Use #UKenergysecurity in your tweets to get involved in the discussion

Notes to Editors

[1] Nuclear Power: 10 Killer Facts ([see attached](#))

[2] Read the [Note to the Prime Minister](#), 13 March

[3] Why Nuclear Power makes No Sense for the UK

A series of Briefings from Tom Burke, Tony Juniper, Jonathon Porritt and Charles Secrett

- 1) Subsidising the Nuclear Industry (25 March – [view online](#))
- 2) Investing in Nuclear: Current Concerns (4 April 2012 – [view online](#))**
- 3) The New Nuclear Industry (17 April – [view online](#))
- 4) The Wider Economic Impacts of Nuclear Power (20 April – [view online](#))
- 5) Why Nuclear Power is Not the Answer for Climate Change or Energy Security (27 April – [view online](#))
- 6) Nuclear Power: A Toxic Issue Goes Critical for the Coalition Government**
(2nd May - see attached)

[4] Press enquiries, requests for interview etc: Mel Trievnor, 01242 266 778.

See online documents at www.jonathonporritt.com and www.tomburke.co.uk