

SMRs. Why so long? Why so slow?

Alastair Osborne writes in his column (Shameful shambles over mega-nukes, Times, 15th February)) about the formidable current problems being encountered in constructing these mammoth projects in the UK and about questions being put by the Environmental Audit Committee of MPs to Ministers about small modular reactors instead, (SMRs), which are both much quicker to build and far less of a burden on public funds. The points the MPs raise are useful but there are some questions not raised which might be even more pertinent.

First, for instance, why is it another five years (until 2029) before a decision on going ahead with the first SMR in the UK is going to be taken? (Several other countries are already way ahead with both plans and orders).

Second, why does it apparently take until 2035 (11 years ahead) to get through all the regulations, tests and siting issues, when some of the suppliers of SMRs say they could have sets of these machines on site and safely contributing low carbon power before the end of this decade?

No corners can of course be cut on safety, but Canada, for example, under its SMR Action Plan, aims to have a new class of very small nuclear reactors generating and in service by 2026, and larger ones by 2030.

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