

# Does nuclear power have the X factor?

TOP GEAR, THE POPULAR BBC PROGRAMME HAS ITS OWN ICONIC RACING DRIVER, THE STIG. BUT, WE AT KNOW+HOW HAVE OUR OWN ANSWER. SOME SAY HE WAS BUILT FROM USED PARTS FOLLOWING THE ANNUAL MAINTENANCE SHUTDOWN, OTHERS THAT HE EMERGED FULLY FORMED FROM A VAT OF CHEMICALS...ALL WE KNOW IS THAT HE'S A TAME MAINTENANCE ENGINEER AND HE'S CALLED, THE TIG.



“ Now, I generally don't like to get involved in politics but the waffle which parties on all sides of the nuclear debate, representing every part of the political spectrum, have been espousing has sent my blood pressure through the roof this week. All this claptrap has been generated by Ed Miliband, The Energy Secretary announcing that the government is going to build a handful of new nuclear power stations.

So what, not before time, says I. Nuclear power is the only solution to the approaching energy crisis – power cuts are predicted for 2017 if nothing is done to generate more power – and although yes, I do agree that hazardous waste disposal remains a teensy weensy problem I am quite confident that the eggheads will come up with an ingenious solution soon.

Of course, the environmentalists were up in arms straight away. Now, don't get me wrong, I am as 'green' as the next man (I wash my plastic bottles up and take them to the recycling point and everything) but their arguments about wind and wave power being able to solve all our problems are just unrealistic. 'Renewables' are part of the solution, but to generate enough power every square inch of the UK would have to be covered in wind turbines and then we would all have to become like Windy Miller from the classic children's TV series Camberwick Green and live inside the windmills.

On the other side of the debate the opposition are complaining about the decision having been taken without Parliament or the electorate having been 'consulted'. Well, the reasoning for this is, firstly, whichever government signed off on nuclear power (and this one has procrastinated for ten years to the point of calamity) would be tarred as 'anti-environmental' by those who operate in and around Westminster. Secondly, it is believed, they would as a consequence, become hugely unpopular with the electorate and be defeated at the next general election. Therefore it took a government that was odds-on at the bookies to get a pasting at the next election to introduce this project before they were swept away. The new lot can just blame the old lot and claim their hands are tied.

But, at this point that I'd like to introduce some bold thinking from the only truly independent group involved in this debate, namely engineers. Be it building nuclear power stations or the technology projects generated by the green economy, engineers are pretty well sorted. Option A means lots of jobs for us, Option B means lots of jobs for us. Therefore with no axe to grind we can take a fair-minded and open approach to the issues – just as we always do.



We are all familiar with the inter-active reality TV shows that currently hold the nation in their thrall on Saturday nights. If there is one thing that these shows have taught us in the last couple of years, with the John Sergeant fiasco and the latest uproar about 'Jedward', is that predicting the mood of the general public or even worse trying to force their hand is fraught with peril.

Therefore, all I think Mr. Miliband has to do, not only to deflect criticism from himself about the nuclear debate but most likely bring his party electoral success with an over-whelming mandate, is to offer people some real choices, (I realise this is highly

subjective and for the sake of brevity these choices are) for women: cute seal puppies or hair straighteners; for men: polar bears or Sky Sports – without nuclear power you can't have both. This would get people engaged, and with the issues simplified down to these direct choices I think that parties on all sides of the

argument would have to cut out the hyperbole and speak honestly to the public, which might lead to some unexpected results...



*If you'd like to write to The TIG and get something off your chest or if you have an opinion about this column then please do write, via email to: [TheTIG@eriks.co.uk](mailto:TheTIG@eriks.co.uk)*