

# Ideas Lab Predictor Podflash (Episode 4) Professor Martin Freer (23/03/2011) Transcript

**Interviewer:** Andy Tootell (Ideas Lab)

**Guest:** Professor Martin Freer

**Recorded:** 21/03/2011

**Broadcast:** 23/03/2011

**Andy:** Hello and welcome to this Ideas Lab Predictor Podflash which is an extra bit of news in addition to our regular podcast series. I'm here in the heart of Westminster at the Institution of Civil Engineers for the second [Birmingham Policy Commissions](#) debate on the [future of nuclear power](#). I'm here with [Professor Martin Freer](#) who's Head of the [Nuclear Physics Group](#) at the University of Birmingham and he's also Director of the [Birmingham Centre for Nuclear Education and Research](#), and he's also leading this policy commission. Hello, Martin.

**Martin:** Good evening.

**Andy:** So the event today, who's involved and what elements of the debate will you be discussing tonight?

**Martin:** We have a broad constituency of people on the panel. We have people from both sides of the argument so we have [Jonathon Porritt](#) on one side, Friends of the Earth; on the other side we have people from the nuclear industry [Dame Sue Ion](#) for example and myself and the panel is chaired by [Lord Hunt](#).

**Andy:** Now, we caught up with you six months ago before the launch of the inaugural event which was at a fringe event at the Lib-Dem party conference back in September. How have things gone in the six months since that time? How have things been shaping up on the debate front?

**Martin:** It has been extremely stimulating. We have had two workshops, one in November and the other one in February. These focused on two sides of the issues associated with nuclear power. The one in February was associated with the technology, future technologies of nuclear power; the one before Christmas was associated with policy, economics and public opinion. So we've explored a lot of territory in that time and it's been extremely stimulating.

**Andy:** I know you're going to be publishing your report in the summer. I know you probably can't reveal anything to me now but do you sort of have an idea in your mind of how that report might come together and what recommendations might go into it?

# Ideas Lab Predictor Podflash (Episode 4)

## Professor Martin Freer (23/03/2011)

### Transcript

Martin: You're absolutely right, I can't share the recommendations with you right now! We are writing that report as we speak, it's coming together, the idea is to find a niche that we can make some genuinely novel statements about the future directions of nuclear power, so already there's been reports by the Royal Society and the House of Lords and what we will do is try and find areas where we can contribute new ideas to an already very interesting debate.

Andy: Now as a final point because I know we're about five minutes away from this event which is why we're hurrying through this interview, I was reading your [Birmingham Brief](#) on the train down which I will provide a link for on our website and it ends very much with the desire for a greater public debate about the future of nuclear power. I was just wondering, in the current climate where there's an austerity drive and employment is high and people are losing their jobs and people have got a lot on their plate to think about, has there ever been a more difficult time to try and engage the public?

Martin: You're right, it is challenging but we have bigger challenges and that is what we do in terms of energy policy in the next five, ten, fifteen years and if we don't have that debate, how we structure our future energy supply, future energy generation, it's going to be too late and we're going to be suffering power outages and harsh times. So it is a hard time to engage with people but it needs to be done.

Andy: Well, I'll let you get to this debate today because I know we're cutting it very fine. I do wish you the very best of luck for it and hopefully we can catch up with you again after the report goes out. Thank you very much for joining me today.

Martin: Pleasure and thank you.