



UAE Confirms World's Largest Single-Site Solar Project

The UAE has continued its mission to shed its reputation of being a country powered by the fossil fuel industry by announcing it will build the largest single-site solar project in the world. Abu Dhabi already holds the current record, with its 1.17GW Sweihan photovoltaic (PV) facility, but plans to surpass that threshold with a 2GW project in Al-Dhafri.

The news is welcome to the international community and a clear sign that the Emirates are serious about transforming their energy profile. Critics had previously accused the UAE government of pursuing renewables as mere vanity projects, without harbouring earnest intentions about the transition. However, having the two largest single-site solar farms in the world will surely announce them as a global leader in renewable energy.

Leading by example

The latest announcement comprises just one of a number of different solar initiatives that the UAE is pursuing as part of its ambitious target to gain 44% of its energy from renewables sources by 2050. “The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is now a leading player in the development of large-scale renewable energy schemes,” [explained Andrew Roscoe](#), editor of the Middle East Economic Digest (MEED).

“Increased grid flexibility will complement Abu Dhabi’s move to decouple power and water. The latest project shows that solar schemes are no longer simply vanity projects for the Gulf’s oil-rich countries. They form a key part of long-term energy goals,” he went on, underlining how the Emirati government are transforming the country’s image from an international perspective.

Elsewhere, the UAE are also pursuing significant expansion of their nuclear capacity. The Barakah nuclear project aims to bring 5.6GW of power online within the next few years, significantly increasing their ability to produce clean forms of energy.

Sign of the times

It’s not just in the UAE where the renewable revolution is taking effect. Indeed, the latest statistics released by the UN show that [renewable energy capacity has quadrupled in the last 10 years](#) all across the globe, from 414GW in 2010 to a whopping 1,650GW in 2019.



The biggest gains have been seen in solar itself, with worldwide capacity leaping up from just 25GW in 2010 to a massive 663GW today. PV spending accounts for almost half of all renewable expenditure in the last decade, while the efficiency of the energy source has also improved by 81%. The UAE's ambitious plans are only set to continue those trends, spelling good news for environmentalists everywhere.

Of course, there is still much work to be done to ensure that the nations of the world meet their collaborative target of limiting global warming to an absolute maximum of 2°C and a preferable high of 1.5°C. The Middle East has traditionally been one of the most culpable regions when it comes to fossil fuel emissions, but the UAE's plans can provide an example for others to follow.