

United Kingdom joins solar's 'Gigawatt Club' Mad March rush sees UK rise into the top 6 utility-scale markets

The UK has jumped to world #6 in utility-scale solar; thanks to a record month when over 500 MW of new projects were connected. It has now joined the select few to have more than one gigawatt of installed capacity, according to figures released today by utility solar authority Wiki-Solar.org.^[1]

Welcoming today's announcement, Energy and Climate Change Secretary Ed Davey said: "The UK is among the world leaders for deploying solar energy and was top in Europe for new solar projects coming online in 2013."

"The market framework created by the UK Government has resulted in significant investment in solar energy generation projects since 2010. Overall, renewable electricity generation investment of up to £40bn is expected by 2020. Our Solar Strategy launched recently, sets out our clear ambition to see further deployment of solar and help us deliver the clean energy supplies that the country needs, at the lowest possible cost to consumers, creating jobs, growth and exports."

The installed capacity of utility-scale^[2] power plants in the leading countries at the end of March was:

Country	No. of Plants	Capacity MW _{AC}
United States	315	5,678
China	213	4,481
Germany	274	3,420
India	167	1,757
Spain	171	1,680
United Kingdom	188	1,328
Italy	82	876
Canada	56	714
France	46	647
Ukraine	17	477

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The top ten world markets for utility-scale solar

This is a dramatic rise for a country, which just four years ago had no utility-scale capacity at all. The introduction of feed-in tariffs in 2010 stimulated the early market for smaller projects up to 5MW. Reducing costs since then have enabled PV systems to enter the more mature Renewables Obligation mechanism, with plants up to 70 MW now being planned.

It took six years for each of the European leader Germany and table-topping USA to reach the 1 GW milestone. The UK has done it in four.

As Wiki-Solar's Philip Wolfe says, "even these figures may be understated. The energy regulator Ofgem has a backlog of several months in the registration process – when final figures are published we may

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find a lot more capacity was actually installed in the first quarter. I wouldn't be surprised if the UK has even overtaken Spain and broken into the top five."

This success supports Ed Davey's ambition, having pushed several British companies to the forefront of the world solar industry, while also creating a new market for leading international players. Wiki-Solar will soon be publishing further details of developers, EPC contractors, IPPs and other major participants in the UK solar market.

T E X T E N D S

Notes for editors:

- [1] This release on the UK utility-scale solar market is available here:
http://wiki-solar.org/library/public/140414_UK_joins_GW_club.pdf
- [2] Following an open consultation, Wiki-Solar defines 'utility-scale solar' as 4 MW_{AC} and above; see:
<http://wiki-solar.org/data/glossary/utility-scale.html>
- [3] A capacity rating of 4MW_{AC} equates roughly to the consumption of 1,500 households in Europe.
- [4] "Solar Photovoltaic Projects in the mainstream power market" was [published](#) in 2012.
- [5] Wiki-Solar's database covers over 2,500 utility-scale solar projects, of which about two-thirds are operational, and the remainder are under construction or development.

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