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United Kingdom rises to #5 in utility solar league

The UK has now leapfrogged over Spain to become the world's fifth largest market for utility-scale solar projects behind only USA, China, Germany and India. This news in figures released today by utility solar authority Wiki-Solar.org^[1] follows the recent disclosure that total UK solar capacity has topped 5 GW, when domestic, industrial and utility-scale installations are all included.^[2]

The latest national figures also show other countries rising dramatically in the world utility-scale solar league tables. Chile has now connected its first projects and joins the list at number 15. Its 3GW pipeline will take it higher in coming months. South Africa and Japan are competing to become the next entrant to the top ten, thanks to substantial backlogs.

The installed capacity of utility-scale^[3] power plants in the leading countries at the end of June was:

Country	No. of Plants	Capacity MW _{AC}
United States	349	6,240.2
China	219	4,709.8
Germany	277	3,454.6
India	184	1,975.1
United Kingdom	233	1,791.9
Spain	171	1,680.0
Italy	85	898.2
France	57	732.2
Canada	56	717.3
Thailand	62	592.6
South Africa	15	503.0
Ukraine	19	490.2
Japan	16	308.0
Romania	17	277.6
Chile	7	269.4
Bulgaria	13	225.4
Czech Republic	26	216.8
Greece	12	117.5
Portugal	11	110.3
United Arab Emirates	3	103.3
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The top twenty markets account for 97% of the world's utility-scale solar

The UK's climb above Spain had been predicted back in April^[4], "but the big question is whether changes to incentives will bring this rise to a grinding halt", says Wiki-Solar's Philip Wolfe. The government recently proposed^[5] withdrawing solar power from the Renewables Obligation, which has supported most of the large installations in recent years.

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This is the latest in a series of what insiders see as assaults on the utility-scale PV sector. "The industry has bounced back each time", says Wolfe, "so it would be premature to say this is the end of the road." Developers have been uncharacteristically reticent to comment on future prospects. "Maybe they are awaiting the outcome of the lawsuit against the government^[6]; maybe they judge the new Contracts for Difference^[7] will provide adequate incentive; or perhaps they are already shutting up shop and moving to more favourable markets" he concludes.

A sign of the rapid progress of the sector worldwide is that countries now need 100MW of installed capacity to break into the world's top twenty. Just 18 months ago it needed only 20MW.

TEXT ENDS

Notes for editors:

- [1] This release on the UK utility-scale solar market is available here: http://wiki-solar.org/library/public/140814 UK rises to No5.pdf
- [2] See, for example, this blog
- [3] 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. A capacity rating of 4MW_{AC} equates roughly to the consumption of 1,500 households in Europe.
- [4] The news that UK installations had topped 1 GW was announced on 14th April: http://wiki-solar.org/library/public/140414 UK joins GW club.pdf
- [5] The government is currently consulting on the removal of solar PV from the Renewables Obligation see here
- [6] A group of solar developers has recently filed a lawsuit against the government claiming that the proposed change to the Renewables Obligation is unlawful see for example here
- [7] The Contracts for Difference will be the primary support mechanism for low carbon generation under the UK's <u>Electricity Market Reform</u>
- [8] "Solar Photovoltaic Projects in the mainstream power market" was published in 2012.
- [9] Wiki-Solar's database covers over 3,000 utility-scale solar projects, of which about two-thirds are operational, and the remainder are under construction or development.

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