

SOUTH AFRICA PLANS THE WORLD'S LARGEST SOLAR POWER STATION



South African Energy Minister Dipuo Peters has confirmed plans to build a 5GW solar power station – the world’s largest to date – in the Northern Cape. And it’s a good place for it. This region is one of the sunniest in the world.

An initial feasibility study declared that 5GW of cost-effective electricity generation would be achievable through a combination of solar technologies in the area – although the exact mix and time frame have yet to be agreed.

A range of options are being considered, including concentrated photovoltaics – in which lenses or mirrors focus the rays onto tiny PV panels, and concentrated solar power (which focuses the sun’s rays to turn water to steam and so drive a generator – see ‘Spain opens the world’s largest CSP plant’). According to Jonathan de Vries who, as Special Adviser to Peters, is in charge of the project, the park will meet nearly one tenth of South Africa’s electricity needs – helping to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels. South Africa currently consumes 45-48GW of electricity per year, 90% of which comes from coal-fired power stations.

The US engineering company Fluor Corporation is to produce a more detailed master plan for the proposed \$10-15 billion facility, in collaboration with the Clinton Climate Initiative and the US Department of Energy. Leading players in the solar world are enthusiastic.

“We need to see more solar parks [like this] if the full potential of both photovoltaic and solar thermal is to be realised,” says Jeremy Leggett, Executive Chairman of Solarcentury.

“Governments across the world are slowly shifting their support to renewables... with incentives such as the feed-in tariff, but there must be a bigger shift in support of these technologies – and an end to fossil fuel subsidies.”

Source: <http://thisbigcity.net/south-africa-plans-the-worlds-largest-solar-power-station/>