


New French law mandates solar panels on new parking lots

Amalyah Hart (<https://reneweconomy.com.au/author/amalyah-hart/>), 11 November 2022 1



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The French Senate has approved a bill (<https://www.publicsenat.fr/article/parlementaire/l-obligation-de-pose-de-panneaux-photovoltaiques-sur-les-grands-parkings>) that will require parking lots with a minimum of 80 spaces to be covered with a canopy of solar panels, to provide both cheap renewable power generation and shade from the Mediterranean sun.

Parking lots with between 80 and 400 spaces will have five years from July 2023 to comply. Larger lots will have just three years from the same date.

Regardless of lot size, at least half of the area of each lot must be covered with panels. The only exceptions will apply to parking lots that face security, architectural or heritage constraints, or lots designed for heavy goods vehicles.

The French government says the energy potential of the measure could equal 11GW, or the equivalent of a dozen nuclear reactors.

That's important, because last year France was the only EU country *not* to reach (<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/02/europe-overachieving-net-zero/>) its renewable electricity generation requirements, though that was largely due to its reliance on nuclear power rather than fossil fuels.

In addition to these solar lots, Engadget reports (<https://www.engadget.com/france-new-law-parking-lots-solar-panels-100435214.html>) that the French government plans to build massive solar farms on the vacant land next to highways, railroad tracks and agricultural areas.

Parking lots covered with solar panels are starting to take off, globally, with a few notable examples including the Belgium Zoo parking lot ([http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-08/12/c_1310123853.htm?](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-08/12/c_1310123853.htm?fbclid=IwAR1OzyotOq4higsWPFCqI3D5BImxIW8P8I9p5WPhc1nNS6T3DNDIfOVZFBC)

[fbclid=IwAR1OzyotOq4higsWPFCqI3D5BImxIW8P8I9p5WPhc1nNS6T3DNDIfOVZFBC](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-08/12/c_1310123853.htm?fbclid=IwAR1OzyotOq4higsWPFCqI3D5BImxIW8P8I9p5WPhc1nNS6T3DNDIfOVZFBC)). Its 7,000 parking spaces are 70% covered by 62,000 solar panels that generate 20MW of peak power, outpacing the zoo's energy requirements.


In the Netherlands, a 35MW, 15,000 parking space solar carport (<https://onestepoffthegrid.com.au/is-this-the-worlds-largest-and-coolest-solar-car-park/>) has been completed at the site of an annual three-day music and camping festival held at Biddinghuizen, a village roughly 70km east of Amsterdam.


In Australia there are a few decent examples, including the 5.8MW solar car park installed at an Adelaide shopping centre (<https://onestepoffthegrid.com.au/massive-5-8mw-solar-car-park-installed-in-73-million-commercial-pv-blitz/>), as part of Vicinity Centres' commercial solar roll-out across 17 shopping centres and five states.


In France, Renewables Infrastructure Group, one of the UK's largest specialist green energy investors, has invested in a [large solar car park in Borgo](https://www.akuoenergy.com/en/borgo) (<https://www.akuoenergy.com/en/borgo>) on the island of Corsica.

The move to mandate solar car parks is part of a major push from France to maximise its renewable energy generation. French President Emmanuel Macron set a new goal this year to increase solar energy production tenfold to over 100GW, and build 50 offshore wind farms.

It comes as the entire EU is being forced to re-evaluate its energy security in light of heightening tensions between Europe and Russia, and amid a series of [technical problems and maintenance issues](https://www.economist.com/europe/2022/10/13/frances-nuclear-reactors-will-not-work-as-normal-any-time-soon) (<https://www.economist.com/europe/2022/10/13/frances-nuclear-reactors-will-not-work-as-normal-any-time-soon>) on the country's nuclear fleet.

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Amalyah Hart is a science journalist based in Melbourne.

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