

Ras Al Khaimah, pioneers of solar energy

Energy from the Desert, a 2006 study by Japanese researchers, calculated that within 36 years most Gulf nations would have the ability to meet 80 per cent of their energy needs with solar power. The region is blessed with an average of 10 hours of sunshine every day in the summer, and seven in the winter. Gulf nations can lead the way in the development of large-scale solar projects, schemes impossible in northern Europe or much of North America, where alternative energy is possible only on a small scale.

In the emirate of Ras Al Khaimah the 85-metre circular solar panel is out of place on the otherwise empty salt plains and desert near Ras Al Khaimah city, but these installations could soon become a common sight.

This futuristic structure is the land-bound prototype of an even larger man-made “solar island” that may float several hundred metres off the coast of Ras Al Khaimah, supplying the energy needs of up to 200,000 homes.

The island is just one of many solar projects that Emirati leaders and international proponents of alternative power hope will provide an answer for future energy supply.