

# Brulpadda's challenges inspire innovation

 By [Nicci Botha](#)

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The Brulpadda discovery is a "game changer", which has renewed exploration interest in South Africa, Adewale Fayemi, Total South Africa exploration and production managing director, told Africa Oil Week delegates in Cape Town.



Photo: Africa Energy Corp

The find in the Outeniqua basin, 175 km off the southern coast of South Africa, has the potential of producing one-billion barrels of gas and Total has fast tracked its planning to maximise the value of the block.



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Brulpadda is not without its challenges. Drilling trials started in 2014, but were suspended when the harsh weather conditions, the fast-moving Agulhas current - with a speed of 3-metres a second – and waves that can reach 7.5-metres high caused a rig component to fail."

The speed of the current creates what looks like a wake around the platform. Fayemi recalls how on one visit, the helicopter pilot asked for the platform to stop moving so he could land, when it was in fact anchored. Therefore, 2015-2018 was a re-engineering phase and we made changes to the operations strategy to maximise operability and minimise the exposure to weather," he said.

While much had been learnt from the experience, with plenty of valuable data to guide the exploration, adjustments had been made to the selection of equipment, while a system had been designed to keep the equipment above water. "If it's above water you are able to care for it, maintain it, inspect it and prevent failure as far as possible," he said.

A change in design had also improved the buoyancy of the equipment, making it more robust, while a high-frequency radar had been installed to detect the weather leading to a marked improvement in metocean forecasting.

Total is due to start two-dimensional and three-dimensional seismic surveys on other parts of the block to identify new prospects, while drilling the other Paddavissie prospects would be undertaken in the first quarter of next year.

He called on the South African government to put an enabling environment in place to ensure investors can make full use of the opportunity.

## ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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