

South Africa gives go-ahead for TotalEnergies offshore drilling

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The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment has given the go-ahead for TotalEnergies to drill offshore for natural gas and oil, after rejecting an appeal from more than a dozen individuals and lobby groups, a document seen by Reuters showed.



The logo of French oil and gas company TotalEnergies is seen at the company's headquarters skyscraper in the financial and business district of La Defense, near Paris, 14 September 2023. Source: Reuters/Gonzalo Fuentes

The appeal to stop TotalEnergies from drilling in Block 5/6/7 off the Cape coast was the latest in a series of challenges seeking to halt energy companies exploring for new offshore discoveries at the foot of Africa.

It sought to persuade environment minister Barbara Creecy to set aside the environmental authorisation granted to the French energy company by the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy in April, on grounds ranging from marine noise and oil spills to climate change and insufficient public consultation.



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But Creecy, sitting as the appellate authority, dismissed their concerns in a 144-page ruling seen by Reuters.

"I am therefore satisfied that the impacts of noise and light have been adequately assessed and mitigated to ensure low impacts on the receiving environment. As such this ground of appeal is dismissed," Creecy said in the ruling dated 24 September.

The area of interest covers some 10,000km² and is located offshore roughly between Cape Town and Cape Agulhas, some 60km from the coast at its closest point and 170 km at its furthest, in water depths between 700 and 3,200m.

TotalEnergies proposes drilling up to five exploration wells.

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