BUSINESSDAY NIGERIA — ENERGY · NIGERIA · DRILLING

NUPRC approves 779 well operations and 39 development plans in ten months

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Nigeria's upstream regulator, the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), has approved 779 oil and gas well operations over a ten-month period, according to reporting by Majorwaves Energy Report — a figure that revises upward the 740 approvals reported by multiple outlets including BusinessDay Nigeria, TheCable, and Business News Nigeria. The updated total also adds 39 field development plan (FDP) approvals to the picture, providing a more complete view of the regulatory throughput underpinning Nigeria's current upstream recovery effort. The discrepancy between the two totals — 740 versus 779 — likely reflects either a later reporting cut-off date in the Majorwaves source or the inclusion of additional approval categories not captured in the earlier accounts; all sources nonetheless point in the same direction toward a substantial acceleration in regulatory activity.

The well-operation breakdown reported across multiple sources — 595 re-entries and 145 new drilling approvals — remains the most granular available, and the revised headline figure of 779 suggests additional approvals may fall into one or both of those categories. Re-entries continue to represent the dominant share of activity, reflecting the strategic reality that indigenous operators, many of whom have absorbed onshore and shallow-water assets divested by international oil companies in recent years, are systematically rehabilitating shut-in or underperforming wells to unlock near-term production. Re-entry operations typically require shorter lead times and lower capital expenditure than greenfield drilling, making them the preferred route to incremental barrels in a capital-constrained environment.

The addition of 39 development plan approvals is a significant data point that the 740-approval figure alone does not capture. FDP approvals mark an earlier and more strategic stage of the project lifecycle than individual well authorisations — they indicate that fields are being formally sanctioned for development, which creates forward demand for engineering, procurement, and construction services well ahead of drilling mobilisation. Taken together with the well-operation count, the FDP figure suggests the NUPRC is processing a broad pipeline of upstream activity spanning both near-term intervention work and longer-cycle project development.

The NUPRC was established under Nigeria's Petroleum Industry Act as the principal regulatory authority for upstream oil and gas, replacing the former Department of Petroleum Resources. The Commission has positioned well-approval throughput, rig-count growth — with the active rig count cited at 100 — and development plan processing as core performance metrics, framing them as evidence of an improving investment climate. Nigeria's government has set production targets aimed at lifting crude output toward and beyond two million barrels per day, and the volume and composition of these approvals reflects the dual-track approach operators are taking: rehabilitating existing well stock while selectively advancing new field development programmes.

Persistent sector challenges, including oil theft, pipeline vandalism, and the operational complexity of integrating divested IOC assets, continue to bear on the pace of actual execution relative to regulatory approvals. Nevertheless, the combined pipeline of 779 well-operation approvals and 39 development plans represents a substantial and multi-horizon service opportunity, spanning immediate wellbore intervention and workover demand through to longer-term drilling, subsurface, and facilities work as FDP-sanctioned projects advance toward first oil.

Why this matters to partners and clients of Saga

Corroboration from a third independent outlet (Business News Nigeria) reinforces the credibility of the 740-approval baseline, while the Majorwaves revision to 779 — inclusive of 39 FDP approvals — strengthens the investment case for Norwegian service companies evaluating Nigeria entry. Near-term opportunity centres on wellbore intervention, coiled tubing, and workover services for the re-entry programme, while the FDP pipeline points to longer-cycle demand in drilling, subsurface engineering, and facilities work as sanctioned fields advance toward first oil.

PARTNER ANGLES

- **Wellbore intervention and workover specialists:** 595 approved re-entry operations represent immediate demand for coiled tubing, well stimulation, and workover services; indigenous operators absorbing divested IOC assets are the primary client base.
- **Drilling services and equipment providers:** 145 new drilling approvals and an active rig count of 100 indicate a healthy near-term market for drilling contractors and associated equipment suppliers.
- **Engineering, procurement, and construction firms:** 39 FDP approvals create forward demand for subsurface engineering, facilities design, and EPC services ahead of drilling mobilisation on newly sanctioned fields.

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