

Open Source



Fireside Chat: Paul Statham



4. Kenya's Open Source Ecosystem

4.1. Fireside Chat with Paul Statham

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Paul Statham is a technology strategist and Commercial Director and plays a central role in shaping the vision and execution strategies of Atlancis Technologies. At Atlancis, he operates at the intersection of infrastructure, investment, and policy, guiding the company's mission to build sovereign digital capacity across Africa. Atlancis focuses on delivering next-generation cloud platforms, combining open source software and open hardware to create scalable, locally-operated infrastructure. Its core proposition of "Open-on-Open" centres on deploying an enterprise cloud stack using technologies such as OpenStack on hardware aligned to the Open Compute Project.

Is there notable government or public-sector engagement with open source in Kenya, and what do you see as the main barriers to deeper adoption — whether that's procurement culture, skills gaps, funding, or regulatory frameworks?

Within Kenya, the policy landscape around open source is evolving, but not yet fully crystallised into a formal "open source first" doctrine of the kind seen in some other Commonwealth jurisdictions. The Information and Communication Technology Authority has taken a leading role in promoting interoperability, standards, and vendor neutrality, while national platforms such as e-Citizen demonstrate a clear commitment to sovereign digital service delivery. These developments, coupled with data protection regulation, are creating the conditions in which open technologies become not only viable, but strategically advantageous to Kenya.

However, adoption remains uneven. Procurement frameworks continue to favour established proprietary vendors, and there is not yet a unified national policy mandating open source as a default. Awareness gaps persist at senior decision-making levels, particularly around total cost of ownership and long-term control. At the same time, the ecosystem faces structural challenges: advanced infrastructure skills are still developing, funding for capital-intensive platforms is limited, and the open hardware landscape, despite the potential of the Open Compute Project, is still nascent.

Are there active developer communities or programs helping grow the ecosystem, and how would you describe the current open source landscape in Kenya in terms of both software and hardware? Yet, it is precisely against this backdrop that the future of open source in Kenya becomes compelling. What is most striking is the convergence now underway between grassroots capability and institutional intent.

Developer communities such as Python Kenya, Nairobi DevOps Community, and pan-African networks like Open Source Community Africa are no longer peripheral: they are forming the talent backbone of the digital economy. They are increasingly connected to global programs such as Google Summer of Code, which provides Kenyan developers with direct pathways into upstream contribution and global collaboration.

Kenya is widely seen as a leading African tech hub. How much of that status owes to open source, and how does Atlancis's vision of digital sovereignty — building and operating infrastructure locally — depend on open technologies?

Enterprise and public sector demand for cloud, AI, and data infrastructure is accelerating. This demand cannot be sustainably met through external dependency alone. The economics, the regulatory environment, and the geopolitical context all point toward greater localisation. Open source, by its very nature, is the only model that allows that localisation to occur at scale without recreating dependency in another form.

Looking ahead, what excites you most about the future of open source in Kenya over the next few years?

What is particularly exciting over the next few years is the transition in Kenya’s open source environment, - from participation to ownership. Kenya has already demonstrated that it can build world-class application-layer innovation, e.g., M-Pesa. The next phase is infrastructure ownership: cloud platforms, AI compute layers, and eventually hardware supply chains. This is where the “Open-on-Open” model becomes catalytic. By combining platforms such as OpenStack with hardware approaches aligned to the Open Compute Project, there is a realistic pathway to building sovereign, industrial-scale digital infrastructure within the country.

Equally important is the generational shift currently underway.

A new cohort of engineers in Kenya is being trained directly on open technologies, collaborating globally from the outset, and approaching infrastructure with a fundamentally different mindset; one that assumes openness, modularity, and community as defaults. This cultural shift is arguably as important as any policy or investment, because it underpins sustainability.

Are there lessons Kenya can share with, or learn from, other Commonwealth nations?

From a Commonwealth perspective, Kenya is particularly well positioned. It has legal and institutional frameworks that can evolve toward “open first” policies, a strong education base, and deep integration into global technology networks. If these elements are aligned, through clearer policy direction, targeted investment, and public-private collaboration, the country can move rapidly from an adopter of open source to a shaper of it.

Where does Atlancis sit within that broader picture?

In practical terms, the future is not about replacing Hyperscalers outright, but about rebalancing the ecosystem. Sovereign, open platforms will co-exist with global services, but with far greater local control, economic retention, and strategic autonomy. Atlancis’ role within this is to provide the bridge between community capability and enterprise-grade delivery: to take the principles of openness and translate them into operational infrastructure.

What is most exciting, therefore, is not a single technology or policy, but the alignment now emerging across all layers: community, capability, regulation, and demand. For the first time, the conditions exist for Kenya to build, own, and scale its digital infrastructure on its own terms. Open source is the foundation of that shift, and “Open-on-Open” is the mechanism through which it becomes real.

Paul Statham, Commercial Director, Atlancis Technologies

A strategic leader with over 30 years of global ICT experience and success in leading high-performing teams to deliver complex commercial projects. Recognised for a customer-centric approach, excellence in business development and product lifecycle management. EMBA in progress. Passionately leading Cloud and Open Compute commercial strategies for Enterprise and Service Providers across the functions of Sales, Marketing, Product Management, Partner Management and CX.

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