

# THE BUSINESS OF MARITIME AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS

## Society of Maritime Industries (SMI)



Attend any conference or exhibition in almost any sector and you will be hard pushed not to find a paper or product offering which addresses the theme of autonomy, particularly in the marine environment. In response, SMI decided it was time to focus on the business of maritime autonomous systems (MAS).

*By John Murray, Society of Marine Industries, UK.*



The Society of Maritime Industries (SMI) is the voice of the UK's maritime engineering and business sector promoting and supporting companies that design, build, refit and modernise ships, and supply equipment and services for all types of commercial and naval ships, ports and terminals infrastructure, offshore oil & gas, maritime security & safety,

marine science and technology, maritime autonomous systems and marine renewable energy.

We all know the ocean is a big place none more so when trying to find out what is underneath its surface or what changes are being wreaked on its chemistry by man's continued occupation of the planet. Therefore it is hardly surprising that those tasked with surveying this vast area are seeking more cost effective ways of undertaking this critical work and increasingly autonomy is being offered as the solution.

### Setting Up Standards

Three years ago the UK government and industry, represented by the UK Marine Industries Alliance, of which SMI is a strategic partner, embarked on a rolling collaborative programme 'to raise awareness, and solve technical, practical, legal and social challenges' in the deployment of maritime autonomous systems. Initial activity has centred around collaborative R&D, supported by government grants, and development of the regulatory regime required to gain acceptance of MAS, which also addressed standards and training requirements for systems with 'man-in-the-loop'.

The UK Marine Industries Alliance brings together all aspects of this diverse sector with the goal of working together to secure the maximum opportunity for the industry to flourish. The Marine Industries Leadership Council set it up on behalf of the industries and all UK companies, trade associations and public sector agencies operating in the marine sector are offered free membership of the UK Marine Industries Alliance and use of its brand identity. The Leadership Council includes trade associations, regional groupings, government departments, devolved administrations and other public bodies.

The work on regulation and standards has been progressing apace and earlier this year a Code of Conduct for surface autonomous vessels was published and efforts are now focused on a Code of Practice supported by regulators, standard setters, lawyers and the insurance industry. International support for these moves is essential and a programme of engagement has begun with initially favourable results.

### MAS Business Focus

It was against this background that SMI saw the need to provide a focus on the business opportunities which were becoming more prevalent from the adoption of MAS as the technology became more main-stream. An inaugural meeting of members in February confirmed this view when a capacity gathering asked the executive management to progress with the formation of a MAS Council to guide the development of policy and activities to aid the business development of members with an interest in MAS. Formally launched at Oceanology International London in March 2016, one of the MAS Council's first tasks has been to survey members and obtain a base line picture of MAS activity in the UK and help guide future activities.

As expected the initiative has generated favourable interest in organisations wishing to join SMI from a wide spectrum of maritime backgrounds. This is not surprising because MAS is not only changing the world of oceanography and hydrography but has application in maritime defence and security, underwater asset management, deep-sea mining, offshore oil/gas, marine renewable energy, environmental monitoring and maritime transport. Our members with an interest in MAS include manufacturers, academia, researchers, survey companies and system suppliers, and all benefit from the connections and activities provided through membership.

Estimates of the potential business value varies but all agree it can be measured in billions of dollars. SMI is now able to focus on this area of business utilising the extensive experience of its Council members in developing activities which will include facilitating outward and inward trade missions to create business opportunities through greater international cooperation; arranging information briefings on key developments in the market; organising networking opportunities with those who have a common interest in maritime autonomous systems; a regular programme of meetings on various aspects of MAS developments and operations with senior high calibre speakers, some of these meetings are restricted to members only; and assistance with sourcing relevant contacts within the industry.

All of this activity is in keeping with our mission statement of 'promoting and supporting the interests of all UK companies that do business in the maritime industries' and more information can be found on the SMI web site - [www.maritimeindustries.org](http://www.maritimeindustries.org).

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<https://www.hydro-international.com/content/article/society-of-maritime-industries-smi>

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