

# Test site to help develop autonomous ship work

Work to develop and test marine autonomous surface ships has been given a boost after a site which will allow sharing of valuable data was chosen in Portland, Dorset (UK).

The Maritime & Coastguard Agency's (MCA) MARLab which includes Solis Marine Consultants and Maritrace, have chosen Portland harbour as a test site for a new online platform which will allow data sharing.

It means that data can be shared between the MCA and various other organisations, all of which will help in the development and testing of MASS in UK waters. Data collected around marine traffic movements, weather and even sea bed information can then be shared with industry for programming of their autonomous vessels.

Ros Blazejczyk, project manager for Solis Marine said: 'Portland presents an ideal choice for this test as a well-defined harbour which is big enough for a MASS test area but not so large that data sets for this viability study become unwieldy.'

Tom Owen, MD at Maritrace added that like many ports, Portland has many separate data-sources it uses to manage its port on a day-to-day basis.

There is an interesting challenge involved in harmonising those sources into a single distribution platform, however the quality of those sources and the enthusiasm and cooperation we have received from the Portland harbour authority have been incredibly helpful as part of this exciting project,' he said.

The MARLab project team will now move forward with software development whilst continuing to engage with the UK MASS industry to determine how data sets held by the MCA and other government organisations can be best utilised with a view to encouraging the testing of autonomous and smart vessels in the UK.'

Dr Katrina Kemp from the MCA said: 'This project forms a vital part of a wider initiative by the MCA to make sure the UK is a world leader in autonomous and smart shipping, with UK waters being open for testing of this exciting new technology.'