UK maritime autonomy market could reach £8bn by 2050

The report provides the first evidence-based assessment of the sector's current size and long-term trajectory and the findings are significant.

Quantifying the UK Maritime Autonomy Opportunity report partners at the report launch, held at Lloyd's Register's London Headquarters.

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, June 4, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Unveiled at an event hosted by Lloyd's Register (LR), Quantifying the UK Maritime Autonomy Opportunity provides the first evidence-based assessment of the sector's current size and long-term trajectory and the findings are significant.

The report, commissioned by the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) and the National Shipbuilding Office (NSO), and delivered by Stehr Consulting, finds that maritime autonomy is already an established part of the UK economy, generating more than £600 million in annual turnover and supporting around 2,000 high-value jobs. Including wider supply chain impacts, this rises to roughly £469 million in Gross Value Added and more than 5,000 jobs.

> The UK Maritime Autonomy Opportunity Report confirms that maritime autonomy is one of the most significant markets for the UK shipbuilding and maritime technology sector and its wider ecosystem."
>
> *Rod Paterson, CEO of the National Shipbuilding Office*

Looking ahead, the report estimates that the UK market could reach £3.7 billion in GVA by 2040 and expand to £8.3 billion by 2050, as autonomous and remotely operated systems gain traction across commercial shipping, offshore energy and defence. With high-growth estimates indicating the market could reach up to £26.5 billion in GVA and 39,200 jobs by 2050.

The launch of the report brought together stakeholders across industry, government and finance to examine how the UK can convert early leadership into sustained competitive advantage.

The report indicates that the sector's transition to greater autonomy is not just an opportunity for maritime technology companies, but for a whole ecosystem including certifying authorities, the financial services sector and UK software, data and analytics supply chain. This aligns with areas where the UK already has established strengths, particularly in safety-critical systems, assurance and regulatory expertise.


Quantifying the UK Maritime Autonomy Opportunity report

The research emphasises the strategic importance of maritime autonomy across national priorities, including defence capability, energy security, productivity and resilience.

However, the report highlights that future market size and value capture are highly sensitive to the speed of deployment, regulatory clarity and the UK's ability to prove capability at scale. The launch event highlighted the ongoing work across government to enable the sector including the inclusion of MASS as a case-study in the Regulation for Growth Bill announced in the King's Speech, the newly launch Maritime & Coastguard Agency Innovation Hub and discussion of the upcoming Shipbuilding & Maritime Technology Action Plan.

The report concludes that the UK has a strong foundation to lead in maritime autonomy, but that leadership is not guaranteed. The critical factor will be whether industry and government can act quickly enough to convert technical capability into real-world deployment, anchoring long-term value in the UK rather than seeing it captured elsewhere.

Rod Paterson, CEO of the National Shipbuilding Office, said: "The UK Maritime Autonomy Opportunity Report confirms that maritime autonomy is one of the most significant markets for the UK shipbuilding and maritime technology sector and its wider ecosystem. A successful UK maritime autonomy sector offers significant commercial opportunities, many of which we are already competing in, and is vital if we are to equip the Royal Navy with the capabilities it needs to fight and win.

"The report highlights the urgent imperative to enable the sector by breaking down the barriers that risk its growth. That is why my team and I will do all we can to drive cross-government action and support the sector through the forthcoming Shipbuilding & Maritime Technology Action Plan."
Andre Burgess, Assured Autonomy Programme, NPL, said: "The economic report provides a

rigorous and balanced assessment of the opportunity for the UK and the actions which must be taken to ensure that exploitation and benefits are not significantly inhibited, so we can make the most of the innovation and ecosystem growth potential.

“The upside opportunity for the UK is compelling, and vindicates the work we have been doing with our partners to establish the Maritime Autonomy Assurance Testbed Programme (MAAT) which represents a critical component in enabling a thriving maritime sector and supporting a safe and secure United Kingdom.”

Tony Boylen, Principal Specialist, Assurance of Autonomy, Lloyd’s Register, added: “This study and the event highlight both the scale of the UK’s maritime autonomy opportunity and the action needed to realise it. For Lloyd’s Register, they reflect years of focused planning and partner engagement to develop the technical requirements, methodologies and delivery relationships needed for MAAT as a comprehensive assurance capability for safe deployment and long-term sector growth.”

The Quantifying the UK Maritime Autonomy Opportunity report is available at: Quantifying the UK Maritime Autonomy Opportunity | Stehr Consulting Ltd

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