

Recruitment Pack – Defence Engagement and Capability Manager (MDSG Manager)

Job advert

About the Society of Maritime Industries (SMI)

The Society of Maritime Industries (SMI) is the trade association for the UK's maritime engineering and business sector. Our broad membership ranges from large prime contractors to SMEs. Member companies can participate in one or more specialist sector groups spanning commercial marine, maritime defence & security, maritime autonomy, ports and terminal infrastructure, marine science & technology, and maritime digital technology.

As a membership-based not-for-profit organisation, SMI provides a wide range of UK and international activities for the benefit of the maritime engineering business community. Our work focuses on presenting members with business opportunities, supporting research and innovation, engaging with government and partners to improve the business environment, facilitating networking, and providing marketing and other services.

About the role

SMI is recruiting a Defence Engagement and Capability Manager to support the Maritime Defence & Security Group (MDSG). The role strengthens SMI's links with civil service officials and the wider UK maritime defence enterprise, supports members' access to key contacts, and delivers a programme of defence-focused events and engagement.

Candidate profile (summary)

- Background in UK defence, shipbuilding, naval systems or maritime services.
- Experience in business development, stakeholder engagement or policy liaison (e.g. MOD/DE&S engagement, defence industry account management, trade association/government engagement, or consultancy/civil service with defence industrial exposure).
- Experience coordinating events, programmes or professional networks.
- Excellent interpersonal, communication and writing skills.
- Highly organised with strong planning and follow-through.
- Diplomatic and confident representing a membership organisation.
- Competent with Microsoft Office and CRM tools.
- Willing to travel across the UK and occasionally overseas.
- Eligible for UK Security Clearance.

How to apply

- An up-to-date CV (maximum 3 pages), including full career history and explanation of any breaks.

- A one-page covering letter summarising how you meet the skills, knowledge and experience required for the role.
- Your availability for interview.

Please ensure your full name is on all documents and save files as: Name – CV / Covering letter.

For further information or an informal discussion, please contact Tom Chant at tom.chant@maritimeindustries.org.

Deadline for applications: 20 February 2026.

Interviews: March 2026.

Job description

Job title: Defence Engagement and Capability Manager

Reports to: Director, Maritime Defence & Security Group (MDSG)

Purpose

To support the MDSG Director in strengthening SMI's relationships across the UK maritime defence enterprise. The post focuses on building day-to-day engagement with civil service officials, enhancing the profile of SMI members, and delivering defence-focused events and activities that connect industry with decision-makers.

Duties and responsibilities

Civil service & stakeholder engagement

- Build and maintain constructive working relationships with officials across MOD and allied government teams (including relevant engagement, exports and small business growth functions).
- Act as the day-to-day SMI liaison for operational queries, introductions and follow-ups with officials.
- Support the MDSG Director and Council Chair in arranging meetings, workshops and briefings that connect members with relevant departments; deputise as required.
- Track changes in MOD structures, programmes and key personnel to keep SMI's contact base and market intelligence current.

Events & programme delivery

- Lead the design and logistics of MDSG seminars, conferences and trade-show activity (e.g. major UK and international defence exhibitions and missions).
- Develop agendas, brief speakers, coordinate sponsorship and ensure professional delivery.
- Identify opportunities for new themed events or joint sessions with government and industry partners.

Capability development & member engagement

- Help map and communicate the breadth of UK maritime defence capability.
- Work with SMI members to identify export, supply-chain and collaboration opportunities.
- Produce concise reports, event summaries and intelligence notes for circulation to members and the MDSG Council.
- Represent SMI's input to relevant delivery groups as agreed.
- Support member recruitment and retention through active engagement and responsiveness.

Optional: skills & workforce development

- Where appropriate, contribute to defence skills initiatives (including liaison with relevant skills delivery groups and professional bodies).

Candidate competencies

- Background in UK defence, shipbuilding, naval systems or maritime services.
- Experience in business development, stakeholder engagement or policy liaison (e.g., MOD/DE&S engagement, defence industry account management, trade association/government engagement, or consultancy/civil service with defence industrial exposure).
- Experience coordinating events, programmes or professional networks.
- Excellent interpersonal, communication and writing skills.
- Highly organised with strong planning and follow-through.
- Diplomatic and confident representing a membership organisation.
- Competent with Microsoft Office and CRM tools.
- Willing to travel across the UK and occasionally overseas.
- Eligible for UK Security Clearance.

Terms and conditions of employment (summary)

Contract: Permanent (full time)

Hours: Monday to Friday 09:00 to 17:00 (1 hour lunch break)

Holiday: 25 days plus public holidays; SMI is closed for the 3 days between Christmas and New Year

Other benefits: Private health care, sickness pay scheme and interest-free season ticket loan (all after successful probation)

References: References will be taken up before an offer of employment can be confirmed