



# Strategic Command

## DEFENCE DIGITAL: SERVICE DELIVERY & OPERATIONS

### Hearing Protection Communication and Situational Awareness (HPCSA) Programme Early Market Engagement (EME)

**April 2025**

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## Background

The Hearing Protection Communication and Situation Awareness (HPCSA) programme wishes to horizon scan emerging technologies to address Armoured Fighting Vehicle (AFV) crew and Dismount Close Combat personnel noise environments with a communications hearing protection and situational awareness system that provides the required levels of attenuation for impulse and continuous noise in conformance with the Control of Noise at Work Regulations (CNAWR) 2005.

The British Army has previously provided Hearing Protection systems for Dismounted Close Combat (DCC) users through the Tactical Hearing Protection System (THPS) and on an individual basis for armoured platforms. The crossover of roles, with DCC users frequently transiting and operating from armoured platforms warrants a holistic approach to **Close Combat Communication and Hearing Protection Systems (CHPS)** to ensure Close Combat (CC) users are provided with the appropriate systems for all operational activity.

A 2021 review of AFV Hearing Protection systems found that the in-service equipment only provided limited protection and resulted in 16 Limitations of Use (LoUs) being imposed. As a result, an interim solution that focused on the force generation and deployment to Operation CABRIT, as well as to commission the characterisation of noise profiles on all armoured platforms was implemented in 2022.

These trials assessed the performance of the in-service CHPS, THPS, systems identified through market analysis and interim systems for both continuous noise (vehicle generated noise) and impulse noise (weapon generated noise).

The British Army has initiated the HPCSA programme which seeks to provide an enduring solution to communications hearing protection pan-Defence. This project is forecast to deliver in Financial Year 26/27 onwards.

In 2023 the Army Inspector's began a review into Noise Governance and Assurance following a large volume of Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) injuries. The findings of this review were endorsed by the Executive Committee on 8 March 2024, which included the recommendation to 'Procure and issue all personnel with noise cancelling PPE that supports situational awareness and communications and is integrated with the full system of PPE'.

This review led directly to the initiation of the CC CHPS project, which addressed the immediate safety critical gap for all CC users and to provide a safe system of training and operation that reduced the risk to users to As Low As Reasonably Practicable (ALARP).

The Authority is inviting industry to participate in an Early Market Engagement (EME) exercise to inform our Supplier Interest Database and Options Analysis, as well as support the development of our Procurement Strategy, User Requirements Document (URD) and Systems Requirements Document (SRD).

## Overview

This EME exercise will be in the form of a Request for Information (RFI) in MS Forms followed by a Market Interest Day event scheduled for Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2025 at Warminster Garrison. The continuous and impulse noise requirements for in-scope platforms are still in the process of being defined. Therefore, the objectives of this EME are to seek information to assist with:

- Development of a Supplier Interest Database so the Project Team can understand interested parties;
- Obtaining an awareness of what Off the Shelf (OTS) solutions and associated support the market can provide;
- Understanding from industry what future EME they would like the Project Team to run following this EME;
- Understanding the potential for an OTS solution to meet the HPCSA Key User Requirements (KURs);

- Understand industry perspective on how to best meet the HPCSA KURs to inform Options Analysis;
- Obtaining costs to inform the project affordability assessment;
- Testing the viability of schedule plans.

## RFI

A number of initial questions have been posed by the HPCSA Programme and MS Forms will be the primary response format for suppliers. If you experience technical issues, please contact the Senior Commercial Officer Mark Bartlett via the [Defence Sourcing Portal \(DSP\)](#). The Authority does not require a hardcopy of your response and does not want you to send responses by email.

Though we would like to receive as complete a response as possible, you are under no obligation to answer every question posed. Where you are unable or do not wish to reply to a question, your response should indicate this alongside a reason why you are unable to answer. You should identify any proprietary elements of your response so that we can exclude them from any information that is shared with other potential suppliers (i.e. to inform our requirement) in support of any possible tender exercise in the future.

## Market Interest Day

You are requested to register your interest in attending the Market Interest Day via the MS Forms link provided below. The deadline for providing a response is Friday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2025. Please be advised that attendance in person to this event will be limited to individuals holding a minimum of SC Clearance.

## Further Information

To register your interest in attending the Market Interest day and to provide a response to the RFI questions, please use this link to MS Forms: [HPCSA MS Form](#)

The MOD will not fund any costs incurred in responding to this EME, these are to be borne entirely by you.

This EME does not represent a commitment by the MOD to launch a formal procurement procedure. The MOD is currently reviewing procurement options as part of internal approvals and any information received is Subject to Contract.

The description of AFV Headsets provided in this document is subject to change without notice or consultation. The MOD will not be held liable for any decisions or investment made based on the information contained in, or inferred from, this EME.

Failure to respond to this EME will not preclude any party from participating in any procurement exercise which may follow on. Additionally, responses will not be scored or influence the evaluation of any future competition.

Any information provided will be viewed primarily by the Tactical Systems Service Executive (TacSys) team in Defence Digital along with the HPCSA team and will potentially be shared with other Defence Digital teams, other Government departments and / or agencies (e.g. Defence Science and Technology Laboratory and Defence Equipment and Support). Information will be held in confidence and will only be issued on a 'need to know' basis. If there are areas of your response that are sensitive mark this accordingly for the Authority to put the necessary safeguards in place prior to issuing the documentation.