



SYNOPSIS

At 0321 on 29 June 2008 the general cargo vessel *Antari* grounded on the coast of Northern Ireland, while on passage from Corpach, Scotland to Ghent, Belgium. The officer of the watch had fallen asleep shortly after taking over the watch at midnight when the vessel was passing the peninsula of Kintyre (Scotland). With no-one awake on the bridge, the vessel continued on for over 3 hours, crossing the North Channel of the Irish Sea before grounding on a gently sloping beach about 7 miles north of Larne.

The chief officer, who was the watchkeeper at the time of the grounding, worked a 6 hours on/6 hours off watchkeeping regime with the master. As has been demonstrated in many previous accidents, such a routine on vessels engaged in near coastal trade poses a serious risk of cumulative fatigue.

Additional safety barriers which could have helped mitigate the risk posed by fatigue were not used: Despite the requirements of STCW, there was no lookout on the bridge throughout the night; and the watch alarm was not switched on. The company's SMS audits had failed to pick up that these important safety requirements were routinely not being applied.

Fatigue of bridge watchkeepers and lack of dedicated lookouts have long been identified as critical safety issues, particularly in vessels trading in near-coastal waters. However the UK has, to date, been unable to garner sufficient international support to introduce more robust standards. To ensure the safety of shipping within UK coastal waters and to protect the environment, it is therefore considered necessary for the UK to address these issues unilaterally.

The Department for Transport and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency have been recommended to:

- Press for an urgent review of the process and principles of safe manning at the IMO to reflect the critical safety issues of fatigue and the use of dedicated lookouts.

and in the interim:

- To instigate robust, unilateral measures to address the fatigue of bridge watchkeeping officers on vessels in UK waters and to ensure that a dedicated lookout is always posted at night, during restricted visibility and as otherwise required in hazardous navigational situations.

A recommendation has also been made to the owner of *Antari* designed to improve its ISM auditing procedures to ensure: the use of lookouts and watch alarms; compliance with hours of rest regulations; and effective passage planning.