

SYNOPSIS



Narrative

At 0652 UTC on 5 December 2005, the French registered ro-ro passenger ferry *Dieppe* ran aground in the approach channel to the port of Newhaven on the south coast of England. The grounding position was 15 metres east of the channel centreline where, according to the latest edition of the locally produced chart, the master should have been able to expect sufficient depth of water to safely navigate *Dieppe* through the approach channel. The vessel refloated 60 minutes later at 0752, with assistance provided from the local tug and the onset of the flood tide. There were no injuries or pollution, and the vessel did not sustain damage.

The accident occurred less than 3 months after the MAIB published its report on the *Sardinia Vera* grounding at Newhaven in January 2005. The report made recommendations to NPP, Transmanche Ferries, the MCA and the DfT to ensure that similar incidents were avoided. As a consequence, this report has taken the opportunity to examine the progress made by the various recipients towards fulfilling complete implementation of their individual recommendations.

Analysis

Dieppe's time of arrival at Newhaven was 50 minutes later than planned. This resulted in a reduction of the tidal height of 0.6 metres at the time *Dieppe* was navigating the approach channel. The master was fully aware of the tidal situation but, in order to avoid further delay to his vessel's schedule, was content for *Dieppe* to enter the port with a minimum UKC of 0.5m, even though the port had a stipulated minimum UKC of 1.0m.

In deciding to reduce *Dieppe's* UKC to 0.5m, the master ignored the possibility that the Newhaven approach channel had suffered additional silting in the recent bad weather. The silting problem was well documented, had been identified by the harbourmaster in his risk assessment, and a recent amendment had required UKC to be increased to 1.5 metres after bad weather until the channel could be re-surveyed. The master was unaware of this new requirement, but he had not considered applying his own additional allowance to help mitigate a known risk. Also, *Dieppe's* echo sounder was not in use at the time of the grounding.

Despite the lack of reporting procedures to confirm *Dieppe's* draught on arrival, prior to the grounding both the harbourmaster and the VTS operator were aware that she must have been entering harbour with a UKC of about 0.5m. However, no action was taken to delay the vessel's arrival as the harbourmaster did not consider himself to have been empowered to enforce the new UKC restrictions.

A joint risk assessment had recently been completed, which established revised arrival and departure criteria for both Transmanche ferries *Dieppe* and *Sardinia Vera*. However, *Dieppe's* master was unaware of the new requirements because the ship managers did not pass them to *Dieppe* until after this grounding.

Since March 2004, Newhaven has remained accredited as having achieved the standards required by the PMSC. During the investigation into the grounding of *Sardinia Vera* in January 2005, the MAIB identified that the NPP board had taken insufficient steps to implement an

adequate safety regime; many of the MAIB's findings were confirmed in the port's own safety audit in July 2005. However, the voluntary nature of the PMSC has made it impossible for the MCA to confirm the port's compliance by audit, and the MCA has had to rely on the port's assurances that it is meeting the requirements of the Code. After this grounding, the only power available to the MCA to improve safety was the issue of a prohibition notice, refusing *Dieppe* access to Newhaven until the port had implemented suitable control measures.

Several PMSC safety issues raised in the *Sardinia Vera* report remain outstanding. Had they been implemented before this grounding, it is possible that it could have been avoided. The accident again highlights NPP's reactive style of safety management and the recurrent need for outside influence to impose change.

Recommendations:

NPP is recommended to:

2006/184 Develop and submit to the MCA an action plan that:

- addresses the outstanding safety issues listed at Section 2.8;
- provides for future marine safety in the port;
- adheres to the tenets of the Port Marine Safety Code;
- is underpinned by the necessary resources.

2006/185 Review its procedures for re-qualifying and briefing PEC holders, to ensure their knowledge of local rules is current, and applied to a satisfactory standard.

The MCA is recommended to:

2006/186 Seek reassurance that the safety culture of NPP justifies continued accreditation to the PMSC.