

## SYNOPSIS



At 0940(UTC) on 1 December 2004, the Cayman Islands registered product tanker *Stolt Tern* ran aground off the south eastern end of the breakwater in Holyhead, following passage from Immingham. The vessel was re-floated the same morning and proceeded to an alongside berth. The ship was carrying 4000 tonnes of gas oil. However, despite damage to the vessel, including a split to her hull, there was no pollution.

The grounding occurred when the ship was entering Holyhead with a harbour pilot embarked. As the ship approached the harbour's breakwater, speed was reduced, and helm was applied to adjust the ship's course by 10° to starboard. The bow thruster was applied to starboard at the same time. As the ship passed the intended heading, efforts to check the swing included the application of maximum port rudder and the use of the bow thruster to port, but these had no perceivable effect. The master was unable to regain control of the movement of the ship, which grounded in shoal water to the south of the breakwater.

The investigation identified several contributory factors, including:

- The ship's turn to starboard could not be checked because of her manoeuvring characteristics when speed was reduced quickly, the differential effects of the tidal stream in the vicinity of the breakwater, and the initial use of the bow thruster and helm.
- Inadequate communication and teamwork between the bridge personnel meant the pilot was unaware that *Stolt Tern's* speed had been reduced to below the level he had requested, or that the bow thruster had been used.
- In an attempt to prevent the collision with the breakwater, the master took evasive action which ignored the advice given by the pilot to put the ship's action astern. Additionally, this action was taken when *Stolt Tern* was too close to the breakwater for it to be successful.
- The ship manager's safety management system had not identified a number of departures from bridge procedures, or material deficiencies affecting the ship's safe navigation, particularly in pilotage waters.
- The precaution of allowing greater passing distance from the breakwater was not considered during the port's risk assessment. This was because the approach to the port was perceived to be relatively straightforward, there had been no history of accidents or incidents to raise concerns and the port management had a high regard for the ability and experience of the pilot.
- It was difficult for the harbour authority to effectively monitor the pilot's performance in all aspects of his work.

Action has been taken by Stena Line Ports UK Ltd to:

- Introduce a one cable exclusion zone around the breakwater head at Holyhead.
- Refine the process for the review of its risk assessments.
- Review the information contained in the Admiralty Sailing Directions regarding Holyhead Port.

Recommendations have been made to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, the British Ports Association, the United Kingdom Major Ports Group, the ship manager of *Stolt Tern*, and the Competent Harbour Authority of Holyhead, with the purpose of:

- Improving and developing the ship manager's safety management system.
- Ensuring action is taken to establish national occupational standards for marine pilots as prerequisites for their recruitment and authorisation.
- Highlighting the need to ensure that risks are reduced to as low as reasonably practical, and that the control measures implemented to reduce risk are regularly reviewed.
- Encouraging the information exchange between pilots and masters to be meaningful and cover all relevant aspects of the bridge organisation, rather than just a paperwork exercise.

