

SYNOPSIS

At 1212, on 22 February 2004, the starboard outer bow door on the P&O cross-channel ro-ro passenger ferry *Pride of Provence* failed as it was being closed prior to departure from the port of Calais. The vessel was rendered unseaworthy and the passengers and vehicles were disembarked.

Cracks in the hinge of the bow door had been discovered 6 days earlier and had been inspected by the company technical department, a Class surveyor and a ship repair yard. The MCA had also been informed. Following a visual inspection, the Class surveyor issued the vessel with a Condition of Class, which allowed the vessel to continue trading until the end of the month. Ship's staff carried out daily inspections of the cracks. The vessel continued to operate without a detailed examination of the cracks and without any operational limitations particularly with regard to weather conditions.

The cracks might have been found earlier and been rectified had non-destructive testing (NDT) been carried out on the bow doors and supporting structure during the refit which was completed a month prior to the failure. Although this work was in the refit specification, it was overlooked and was not carried out.

During the MAIB investigation, it became apparent that the vessel had suffered previous cracking to the starboard bow door support structure, and that the starboard door made contact with the "cowcatcher" framework when opened. However, neither the vessel owner nor the Classification Society for the vessel had carried out effective investigations into the cause of the cracking, but they had repaired and strengthened attachments with no further repeat of any cracking for over a year. Neither party had perceived the significance of the contact with the "cowcatcher".

Early in the investigation, MAIB was advised that hydraulically operated locking wedges had been removed from the door structure some years before the incident by a previous owner, but neither Lloyd's Register nor P&O Ferries had been aware of this fact prior to the incident. The MAIB investigation also highlighted apparent deficiencies in the International Association of Classification Societies (IACS) rules for bow door securing devices.

As a result of their own and the MAIB investigation, P&O Ferries Ltd and Lloyd's Register of Shipping have initiated measures to prevent similar accidents in the future. Action has also been taken by the MCA. Recommendations arising from the MAIB investigation have been addressed to P&O Ferries Ltd, Lloyd's Register of Shipping, IACS and the bow door manufacturer.