

SYNOPSIS

All times are UTC (+1)

At 0755 on 29 January 2004, the UK registered general cargo vessel *Scot Venture* made contact with Number 16 buoy in the Drogden Channel, Denmark, in restricted visibility. The vessel then anchored clear of the channel until towed to Malmo, Sweden, for inspection. *Scot Venture's* propeller blades were distorted; the buoy was subsequently found to have been severed from its moorings.

The contact occurred when *Scot Venture* was approaching the Drogden Channel from the south. The chief officer was the OOW. After the vessel passed to the east of the Drogden Channel Lighthouse, he altered course to head towards the Drogden Channel's southern entrance, in accordance with the voyage plan. The channel entrance was less than a mile away and marked by Numbers 16 and 17 lateral buoys. Soon after the alteration, visibility significantly decreased because of snow. The precipitation also degraded the radar picture to the extent these buoys were no longer displayed. Number 16 buoy was then sighted visually at close range off the starboard bow, and although avoiding action was taken, this was unsuccessful.

The investigation highlighted several contributory factors, including:

- The chief officer was alone on the bridge in an area close to navigational dangers, in restricted visibility, and potentially high traffic density.
- The chief officer was unfamiliar with the area and with handling the vessel in the loaded condition.
- The vessel had two watchkeepers, therefore it was difficult for the master to assess the chief officer's competency, and caused him to place more reliance on him to navigate in areas close to navigational dangers and with high traffic density, than might otherwise have been the case.
- An AB lookout was available, but was not used, because the chief officer thought the seaman was tired. He also considered ABs to be generally ineffective as lookouts.
- Navigation in the approaches to the southern entrance to the Drogden Channel can be difficult, due to strong cross-currents, the narrowness of the channel, and the presence of southbound traffic.

Recommendations have been made to the Royal Danish Administration for Navigation and Hydrography and the International Chamber of Shipping, for the purpose of making navigation in the southern approaches to the Drogden Channel safer, and encouraging the better use of lookouts.