

SYNOPSIS



In the early afternoon of 3 September 2003, the owner of a small cabin cruiser, with two friends, made preparations for a short fishing trip on Loch Ryan, south-west Scotland. Shortly after the boat was launched in Lady Bay, and while still close to the shoreline, the boat was struck by two waves which swamped her and swept her ashore. The boat suffered damage and the owner was injured.

Several minutes before, at about 1500 (UTC+1), a high-speed ferry passed Lady Bay on a scheduled voyage from Stranraer to Belfast.

During the MAIB investigation, the general issue of ferry-generated waves on Loch Ryan was reviewed. The issues identified were found to be common with the causes of this accident.

Ferries have been operating out of Loch Ryan since the middle of the nineteenth century. Fast ferries were introduced in the early part of the 1990s.

Waves generated by the wash from fast ferries have been recognised as a problem during the mid-1990s, usually because of large waves breaking on the shoreline of the loch. Small boats had also been affected by these waves when within 50 metres of the shoreline.

Consequential changes in operational procedures by the ferry operators have significantly reduced the frequency of reported problems.

The investigation invited submissions from members of the public on the subject of large unexpected waves on Loch Ryan. It has been concluded that while significant reductions have been made to wash-generated waves on the loch, this accident and other data show that some dangers remain.

Three recommendations are made, all addressed to Dumfries and Galloway Council, which, if accepted and implemented, will initiate some immediate remedial actions and set in motion a course of action to put in place a system of safety management on and around Loch Ryan under the umbrella of a statutory harbour authority.