SYNOPSIS

On 18 July 2002 at about 1900 UTC, the high speed craft *Portsmouth Express* passed East Cowes, Isle of Wight. Shortly after, large wash waves hit the shore, injuring five members of the public. The MAIB investigation began 4 days later.

Portsmouth Express operates on the ferry route between Portsmouth and Cherbourg in the summer. On 8 July 2002, she was taken to Southampton to have a crankshaft replaced in one of her main engines. At the time of the accident, the vessel was sailing back to Portsmouth after the period of repair. A Southampton pilot was on board.

Portsmouth Express was operating about 0.7 mile offshore; on board, the master, chief officer and pilot were unaware that the vessel was producing a hazardous wash. When the wash arrived onshore, a series of large breaking waves was produced, which rolled up the beach and went right over the sea wall, flooding the road and car park beyond. It was high water at the time and the sea was calm.

The hazardous wash was produced because the speed of *Portsmouth Express* was too high for the depth of water in the channel past East Cowes. It is considered that the master, chief officer and pilot had an insufficient understanding of the wash produced by HSC.

A Risk Assessment for Passage Plan (RAPP) was produced for the normal ferry route. This document contained a detailed study of the wash, and specified the speed profile and track to avoid problems. While such a detailed RAPP was not needed for the infrequent voyages between Southampton and Portsmouth, the passage plan on 18 July 2002 should have included a brief RAPP which assessed the depth of water versus speed for the entire route, and the possibility of producing hazardous wash. The passage plan compiled on the day of the accident did not adequately consider the effects of wash.

Recommendations have been made to operators of HSC and to harbour authorities that employ pilots who undertake HSC movements; the recommendations cover RAPPs and the training of masters and chief officers. Recommendations have been made to the MCA to clearly specify the training required for HSC wash.