

SYNOPSIS



At 0851 UTC on 1 February 2002, the Italian-registered passenger ro-ro ferry *Sardinia Vera* ran aground at the entrance to Newhaven approach channel. She was refloated at 1048 on the rising tide. There was minor damage to the vessel, no pollution and no injuries to persons.

There was a 2.5 metre south-westerly swell running, with a wind speed of around 25 knots (force 6 on the Beaufort scale) gusting to 32 knots. It was just over 1 hour after low water.

A pilot was on board because the first officer was undergoing training for a pilotage exemption certificate. The master already held such a certificate for Newhaven.

The vessel was approaching the channel from the south-west. As the breakwater came abeam, the first officer ordered hard to port. However, the vessel failed to turn as expected and subsequently grounded on or just inside the eastern side of the approach channel.

The prevailing weather subsequently forced her into shallower water. A tug attempted to secure a line, but failed. Also attempts were made to refloat the vessel using her engines. She finally refloated with the use of her anchors and engines, and then entered the harbour and berthed without further incident.

The MAIB was able to gain information about the grounding from CCTV data recorded in the port control office. However, no voyage data recorder or any other recording device was fitted to the ferry. This lack of recorded information hampered the investigation.

The cause of the grounding was the vessel failing to turn sufficiently to port at the entrance to the approach channel. The precise reasons for this have not been determined. However, a number of contributing factors have been identified.

Recommendations have been addressed to Newhaven port.