

SYNOPSIS



At about 1600 BST on 16 October 2000, the MAIB was informed of a collision involving the United Kingdom ro-ro passenger ferry *European Tideway*, and the Netherlands fishing vessel *Vrouw Grietje*. Damage was said to have been sustained by the ferry which was heading towards Felixstowe at slow speed. The ferry reported no injuries. It was unknown at that time if the fishing vessel had suffered any damage or injuries. MAIB inspector Andrew Clifton carried out the investigation.

European Tideway was on passage from Europoort to Felixstowe, making good between 15.5 and 16 knots on a westerly course. She had 32 crew and 15 passengers on board and was part-loaded with freight.

Vrouw Grietje had left the port of Stellendam that morning and had started fishing in a north-westerly direction. She had seven crew on board. The skipper had left the wheelhouse at 1430 informing the deckhand on watch, his 19-year-old son, to turn around at a pre-determined position and to continue fishing to the south-east.

Vrouw Grietje crossed *European Tideway*'s bow from port to starboard at a distance of about 2 miles, and then reached the pre-determined position. The deckhand then altered course to starboard through about 180° without first checking visually, or by radar, for other vessels.

European Tideway's OOW then interpreted that a risk of collision existed and after briefly assessing the situation, altered course to starboard. Shortly after the ferry's alteration, *Vrouw Grietje*'s watchkeeper altered course to port. The fishing vessel was swinging to port quicker than the ferry was swinging to starboard, and the two vessels collided. The fishing vessel impacted bow-on to the ferry's port bow.

Vrouw Grietje suffered slight damage to her bow and forward handrails. *European Tideway* sustained a 6-metre long gash in her port bow above the waterline. There were no injuries and no pollution.

The collision was witnessed by a nearby vessel fitted with a voyage management system which recorded the course, speed and actions of both vessels up to the time of the collision. This information was of great assistance to the investigation.

The initiating cause of the collision was *Vrouw Grietje*'s watchkeeper altering course, resulting in an interpreted risk of collision with *European Tideway*.

Recommendations are addressed to *European Tideway*'s owner regarding voyage data recorders, the use of water-based information for collision avoidance, visual bearings and post-collision action. Recommendations are also addressed to *Vrouw Grietje*'s owner regarding the need for a proper lookout, competent watchkeepers and skipper's instructions.