

SYNOPSIS

On 22 October 1998, the Romanian registered ro-ro cargo ship *Octogon 3*, of 9,983gt, ran aground on Spurn Head at the entrance to the River Humber. Humber Coastguard informed the MAIB by telex at 2314 that day. Captain P Kavanagh carried out the investigation.

As *Octogon 3* approached the pilot embarkation point at the Spurn light-float, inbound from Dunkerque, she was informed by VTS Humber that because of the strong south-westerly winds, the pilot launch would meet her further in towards the river between Chequer No 3 and Binks No 3A buoys. The ship continued towards the river entrance and altered course to 295°, when 5.8 cables south of the Chequer No 3 buoy. In this position, she was on the south, and port side, of the approach channel and in the path of an outbound ferry. On her new course the effects of the wind and tide caused the ship to set to starboard and towards the north side of the channel.

As *Octogon 3* approached Binks No 3A buoy, she was asked by the coxswain of the pilot launch to slow down to enable the pilot to board. He did so between the Binks No 3A buoy and Spurn Head. Despite *Octogon 3*'s engines being put to full ahead, she was unable to counteract the effects of wind and tide and grounded shortly after the pilot had reached the bridge.

On the following morning and near to high water, the ship refloated, with the aid of a tug. *Octogon 3* completed her voyage to King George Dock in Hull, without assistance or further incident. There was no damage to the hull and there was no pollution.

The grounding was caused by the selection of a course on board *Octogon 3* that made no allowance for either wind or tide so that she was set to starboard until she grounded near Spurn Head.

No pilotage passage plan had been drawn up, and no positions were plotted during the approach to the pilot embarkation point. Therefore, the bridge team was ineffective in providing safe navigational information and the master failed to appreciate of the rate of drift.

The sea-keeping qualities of the pilot launch were such that it was not capable of embarking safely pilots on board ships at the designated boarding position in bad weather. There was an absence of any warning from VTS Humber to show concern about *Octogon 3*'s position and track.

Recommendations are made on the training of navigating officers and passage planning, and on traffic lanes for the approaches to the River Humber, pilot launches and VTS operators to be more proactive in giving warnings to vessels.