

SAFETY FLYER TO THE FISHING INDUSTRY

Grounding and subsequent loss of the prawn trawler *Sustain* (UL 45) on Rubha Camas a' Mhaoraich, Loch Broom, Scotland on 16 November 2023

Background

The prawn trawler *Sustain* operated daily from Ullapool, departing port each day between 0600 and 0700 and returning between 1900 and 2000. On the night before the accident, the skipper had remained awake repairing the deck wash pump and had decided to sail early at around 0230 once the repair was completed.

Narrative

On the evening of 16 November 2023, *Sustain* grounded on Rubha Camas a' Mhaoraich at the entrance to Loch Broom, Scotland while returning to Ullapool after a day's fishing west of the Summer Isles (see **figure**). The vessel's hull was breached and it was declared a constructive total loss by the end of November.

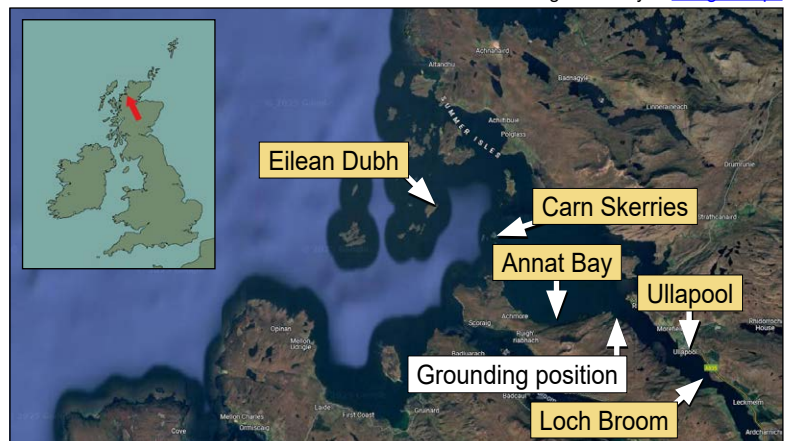
During *Sustain*'s passage back to Ullapool the skipper was on watch in the wheelhouse and the two crew members were on deck sorting the catch. During the passage the skipper felt tired and, worried they would fall asleep, made a cup of coffee and opened the windows to let in some fresh air. About 15 minutes later, having fallen asleep in the wheelhouse chair, the skipper was woken by the vessel grounding. Despite the best efforts of the vessel's crew, other fishing vessels and a Royal National Lifeboat Institution all-weather lifeboat, *Sustain* could not be moved from its position on the rocks.

Image courtesy of Graeme MacIennan ([MarineTraffic.com](https://www.marinetraffic.com))



Sustain

Image courtesy of [Google Maps](https://www.google.com/maps)



© Made Smart Group BV 2025 © i4 Insight 2025 charts are not type-approved and for illustration purposes only

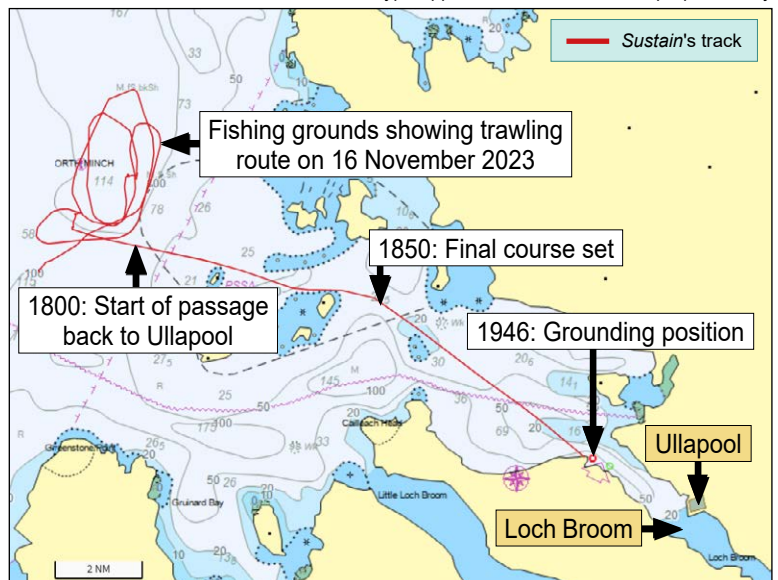


Figure: Fishing grounds and *Sustain*'s passage back to Loch Broom

Safety lessons

1. *Sustain's* skipper had built up a sleep debt during their current and previous fishing runs and was further fatigued at the time of the accident following a decision to sail early after working much of the night repairing the deck wash pump. This led to them being dangerously fatigued at the end of the day's fishing and their attempts to stay awake during the return passage were unsuccessful. The power of fatigue and the risk of falling asleep it creates cannot be underestimated.
2. Sleep debt built up from normal fishing routines increases the likelihood of fatigue-related symptoms, such as impaired decision-making and reduced resilience to extended wakefulness, and it increases susceptibility to falling asleep when working through periods of circadian low.
3. The hazard of ineffective watchkeeping due to fatigue was recognised in the vessel's risk assessments. However, the control measures were not implemented as another crew member was not called for assistance and no watchkeeping alarm was fitted. Skippers should follow regulatory guidance to avoid lone watchkeeping and to install and use watch alarms.
4. *Sustain's* skipper did not comply with the requirements of Merchant Shipping Notice 1884 (F) International Labour Organization Work in Fishing Convention (No.188): Working Time in the days preceding the accident. Compliance with working time regulations assists fishermen to rest enough to operate safely.

This flyer and the MAIB's investigation report are posted on our website: www.gov.uk/maib

For all enquiries:
Marine Accident Investigation Branch
First Floor, Spring Place
105 Commercial Road
Southampton
SO15 1GH

Email: maib@dft.gov.uk
Tel: +44 (0)23 8039 5500

Publication date: July 2025

Extract from The United Kingdom Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012 – Regulation 5:

"The sole objective of the investigation of an accident under the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012 shall be the prevention of future accidents through the ascertainment of its causes and circumstances. It shall not be the purpose of an such investigation to determine liability nor, except so far as is necessary to achieve its objective, to apportion blame."

NOTE

This safety flyer is not written with litigation in mind and, pursuant to Regulation 14(14) of the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012, shall be inadmissible in any judicial proceedings whose purpose, or one of whose purposes is to attribute or apportion liability or blame.

© Crown copyright, 2025

You may re-use this document/publication (not including departmental or agency logos) free of charge in any format or medium. You must re-use it accurately and not in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and you must give the title of the source publication. Where we have identified any third party copyright material you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.