

**REPORT OF THE  
INVESTIGATION INTO  
THE GROUNDING OF  
THE M.F.V. "ELSINOR" AT  
FOILNABOE, IRELAND ON  
THE 15TH SEPTEMBER,  
2001.**

The Marine Casualty Investigation Board was established on the 5<sup>th</sup>, June 2002 under The Merchant Shipping (Investigation of Marine Casualties) Act 2000

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# SYNOPSIS

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## 1. SYNOPSIS.

- 1.1 The French stern trawler M.F.V. "Elsinor" departed Castletownbere at approximately 01.01\* hours on the 15th September 2001 with a crew of eleven onboard. The vessel ran aground on rocks at Foilnaboe at approximately 01.20 hrs. There were no injuries and no pollution was reported.

\* All times are local time i.e. GMT + 1 hour (expressed in 24 hour notation).

## 2. FACTUAL INFORMATION

### 2.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE VESSEL

Nationality:	French
Port of Registry:	Bayonne
Call Sign:	FZCN
Type of Vessel:	Stern Trawler
Year of build:	1975.
Builders:	Con. Mec. De Normandie, Cherbourg
Length Overall:	35.41M
Registered Length:	31.56M
Registered Breadth:	7.60M
Maximum Draft:	3.607M
Gross Registered Tonnage:	230.92 (National)
Engine Power:	588kW
Propellor:	Variable Pitch
Life Saving Appliances:	2 x 12 person 'Zodiac' liferafts 12 x Helly Hanson Immersion Suits
Navigation Equipment:	2 x Furuno Daylight Radars 1 x Simrad Gyro Compass 1 x Simrad Autopilot 1 x Sercel GPS 1 x Magnetic Compass
GMDSS Radio Equipment:	Sailor

### 3. EVENTS PRIOR TO THE INCIDENT

- 3.1 The M.F.V. "Elsinor" arrived in Castletownbere at approximately 19.30 hours local time on the 14th September 2001. The vessel discharged about ten to twelve tonnes of mixed fish and prepared for departure. The vessel had been at sea since the 3rd of September.
- 3.2 The vessel "Elsinor" is a French registered vessel. The Skipper at the time of the incident was French and the rest of the crew was Spanish. The vessel "Elsinor" operates with two Skippers; the second Skipper known as the 'Patron de Pesca' or fishing Skipper is Spanish. The system of having a dual chain of command is not unusual where a vessel is registered in one country but operates from another.
- 3.3 The 'Capitan' or legal Skipper of the vessel has approximately thirty years sea going experience and holds appropriate qualifications to sail as Skipper of the vessel. The 'Capitan' maintains that he has plenty experience of navigating in and out of Castletownbere on the "Elsinor" and other vessels. The 'fishing' Skipper holds appropriate Spanish qualifications to sail as Skipper on the vessel "Elsinor".
- 3.4 The 'Capitan' said that he arrived in the wheelhouse as the vessel was sailing from Castletownbere. He said that he made himself a cup of coffee as the vessel made its way out the channel leaving the port. The 'Capitan' said that he took no active part in the navigation of the vessel at this time. The Capitan said he did not look in the radar as the vessel was sailing. The Capitan said it was very dark and it was raining slightly. The Captain said that the Patron de Pesca (fishing Skipper) was at the helm and had taken the vessel off the berth. There was nobody else in the wheelhouse.
- 3.5 The number of fish boxes on deck may have partially obstructed the view from the wheelhouse windows.
- 3.6 The normal route out of Castletownbere would take the vessel with the inner harbour leading lights astern and following a course of 190° (T) (True course) until the vessel entered the red sector of the directional light on Dinish Island. As the red sector changed to white the vessel would be required to alter course to 204° (T).
- 3.7 The fishing Skipper in his statement indicated that he believed the 'Capitan' was in charge and that he was taking directions from him. The fishing Skipper stated that the vessel was on half speed and that he was waiting for the white light sector in order to put the helm to starboard.

#### 4. THE INCIDENT

- 4.1 The first indication that anything was wrong was when the vessel went aground on Foilnaboe rocks in approximate position 51° 38.08'N, 009° 54.64W at approximately 01.20 hours local time on the 15th September 2001. (See Appendix 8.1)

### 5. EVENTS FOLLOWING THE INCIDENT

- 5.1 The vessel called the local agent in Castletownbere on VHF Channel 12. The agent alerted the Irish Coast Guard in Valentia. The Coast Guard tasked Castletownbere lifeboat and Helicopter 115.
- 5.2 The crew of the "Elsinor" all disembarked into one of the two onboard 12 person liferafts.
- 5.3 The agent proceeded to the "Elsinor" with his launch and arrived at the scene shortly before the lifeboat. At the scene he found the "Elsinor" at a steep angle and listing heavily to starboard (See Appendix 8.2). The crew disembarked from the liferaft onto the agents boat.
- 5.4 An access hatch on the poop deck of the "Elsinor" was open. As the vessel settled on the rocks with a large stern trim seawater flooded the engine room and the accommodation.
- 5.5 At 01.37 hours the Irish Coast Guard stood down Helicopter R115 and at 01.56hrs Castletownbere lifeboat returned to base.
- 5.6 During the day absorbent booms were deployed to counter pollution. Four sea sentinel booms were deployed on 16th September 2001.
- 5.7 On the 18th September 2001 the vessel was refloated with the aid of a salvage tug and towed into the harbour and made fast at a berth at Dinish Island.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

- 6.1 The vessel did not go aground on account of any failure of onboard navigation equipment, engines or steering gear. It would appear that the vessel went aground due to human error.
- 6.2 The manner in which the vessel struck the rocks resulted in the vessels hull remaining intact. In this respect it was fortunate that there was no loss of life, no significant pollution and no injuries to the vessel's crew.
- 6.3 There may have been a breakdown in communication between the 'Capitan' and the 'Patron de Pesca' when the vessel was navigating out of Castletownbere. The Patron de Pesca (fishing Skipper) maintains that he was navigating the vessel under the direction of the 'Capitan' but the 'Capitan' maintained that the fishing skipper took the vessel off the berth and had full charge of the watch as the vessel was leaving the port.
- 6.4 Due to the relatively short time the vessel was in port some members of the crew may not have received adequate rest and fatigue may have played a part in the grounding of the vessel.
- 6.5 According to local persons this is not the first time a vessel has gone aground in this location. The Aids to Navigation present in the harbour together with good radar and visually conspicuous objects should assist the mariner sufficiently in planning and executing a passage to and from Castletownbere. (See Appendix 8.3)
- 6.6 In particular judicious use of the directional light on Dinish Island should negate the possibility of a vessel going off course and going aground on the Foilnaboe rocks.
- 6.7 The vessel did not make proper use of on board GMDSS (Global Marine Distress and Safety Systems) equipment and did not follow proper radio procedures. The agent alerted Valentia Radio by telephone. The failure of the vessel to follow proper radio procedures could have resulted in a delay in the response of the Irish Coast Guard.
- 6.8 The vessel was not properly secured for sea. The poop deck hatch was left open which caused the engine room and other spaces to be flooded.
- 6.9 The 'Capitan' said that some items of navigation equipment went missing after the vessel went aground and that charts and publication were destroyed by the ingress of water.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

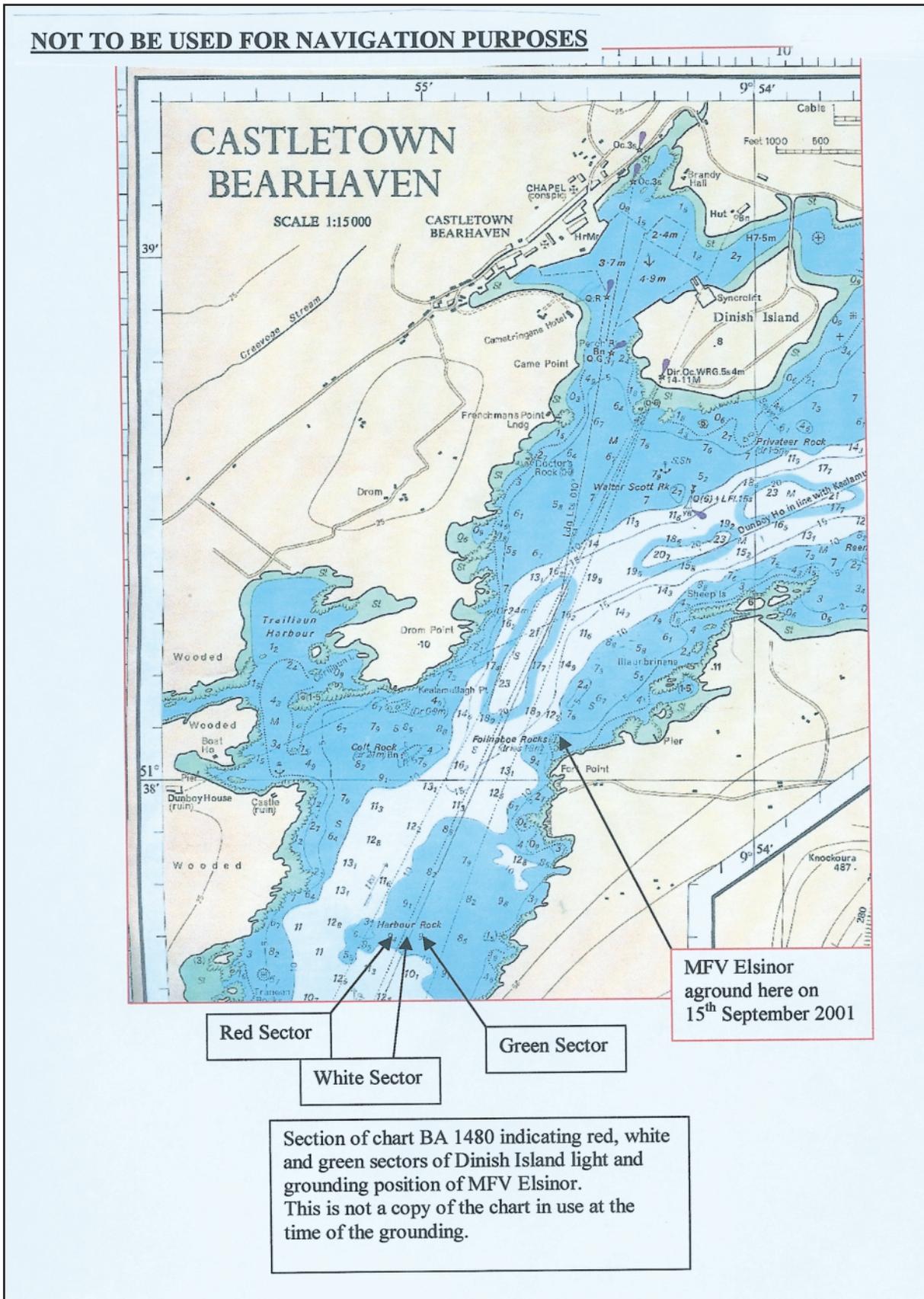
- 7.1 On all vessels it should be clear at all times as to who has command of the vessel or who is in charge of the navigational watch. This is especially important where owners of fishing vessels require division of on board areas of responsibility from a commercial viewpoint. Written procedures should be in place to ensure that there is no possibility of confusion.
- 7.2 Foilnaboe rocks dries out to a height of 1.8 metres but they are submerged at high tide. It is recommended that a study be undertaken by the appropriate authorities to assess the risks and make recommendations as to whether an Aid to Navigation buoy with light should be located in the vicinity of Foilnaboe Rocks.
- 7.3 A Marine Notice should be issued advising owners/operators of the correct marine radio procedures to be followed when a vessel is at sea. This Notice should emphasize the importance of maintaining an aural radio watch on the International Distress and Safety VHF Channel 16 and the importance of transmitting aural Distress Safety Calls on VHF Channel 16.

**8. APPENDICES**

- 8.1 Section of Chart BA 1480 showing grounding position of M.F.V. "Elsinor".
- 8.2 Photograph of M.F.V. "Elsinor" aground.
- 8.3 Letter from Commissioners of Irish Lights in relation to Aids to Navigation.
- 8.4 Met Eireann Weather Report.

# APPENDIX 8.1

## 8.1 Section of Chart BA 1480 showing grounding position of M.F.V. "Elsinor".



8.2 Photograph of M.F.V. "Elsinor" aground.



8.3 Letter from Commissioners of Irish Lights in relation to Aids to Navigation.



**COMMISSIONERS OF IRISH LIGHTS**

16 Lower Pembroke Street • Dublin 2

Telephone + 353 - 1 - 662 4525 • Fax + 353 - 1 - 661 8094  
Telex 93311 CIL EI • Website: <http://www.cil.ie>  
e-mail: Marine Department - [marine@cil.ie](mailto:marine@cil.ie)

*Your Ref:*

*Our Ref:* IMS/127/67

*Date:* 21 September 2001

**RE: MARINE INCIDENT, CASTLETOWNBERE, 15 SEPTEMBER '01**

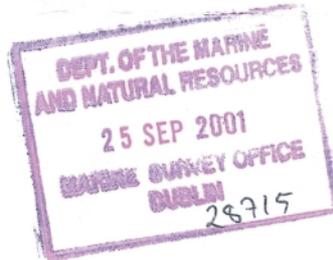
I can confirm that the Aids to Navigation in the vicinity of Castletownbere and operated by the Commissioners of Irish Lights were functioning correctly around the time of the incident.

I enclose the Casualty Status Report for the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> September '01.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. O'Higgins', is written over a faint, circular official stamp.

**CAPT. KIERAN O'HIGGINS**  
For **INSPECTOR OF LIGHTS & MARINE SUPERINTENDENT**



8.4 Met Eireann Weather Report.



**MET ÉIREANN**  
*The Irish Meteorological Service*

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Dublin 9, Ireland.

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Baile Átha Cliath 9, Éire.  
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E-mail: [met.eireann@met.ie](mailto:met.eireann@met.ie)

**Weather Report for the sea area  
at Foilnaboe Rocks, Castletown Bearhaven, Co. Cork  
on the 15th September between 00 and 02 hours GMT(UHT)**

**General Situation**

A fresh north westerly wind covered Ireland

**Details**

Winds: North to north-west Force 2 to 4

weather: a few showers in the area

Visibility: good

Seastate: there were moderate to rough seas off the south west coast of Ireland , however as the direction was mainly from the north-west, the area itself should have been sheltered from these waves.

## 9. INDEX OF CORRESPONDENCE

### Correspondent

Irish Coast Guard	16
Captain John Donnelly (Harbour Master, Rossaveal)	17

Irish Coast Guard  
GARDA CÓSTA na hÉIREANN



Mr Dick Heron  
Secretary  
Marine Casualty Investigation Board  
Department of Communications,  
Marine & Natural Resources  
Leeson Lane  
Dublin 2.

28<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2003.

Re MCIB 23 Draft Report on grounding of FV Elsinor 15<sup>th</sup> Sept 2001.

Dear Mr Heron,

The Irish Coast Guard has no comment or observation to make concerning this report.

Yours sincerely,

  
**Eamon Torpay**  
SAR Operations Manager  
IRCH HQ.

Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, Leeson Lane, Dublin 2, Ireland.  
An Roinn Cumarsáide, Mara agus Acmhainní Nádúrtha, Lána Chill Mochargán, Baile Átha Cliath 2, Éire.  
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Baile Átha Cliath 2.



Department of Communications,  
Marine and Natural Resources  
Dublin 2.

Dick Heron,  
Secretary Marine Casualty  
Investigation Board,  
Leeson Lane,  
Dublin2



28/11/03

Your Ref: MCIB 23.

Re: Draft Report on Grounding of M.F.V. Elsinor @ Castletownbere on 15/09/01

A chara,

I refer to the letter and draft report you sent to me on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2003 about the M.F.V. Elsinor.

As requested I am confirming that I have no comments or observations to make on this draft report.

Mise le meas

Captain John C. Donnelly  
Harbour Master  
Rossaveel FHC

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Lána Chill Mochargán  
Baile Átha Cliath 2

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