

MCIB

Marine Casualty Investigation Board
Bord Imscrúdú Taismí Muirí



**INTERIM REPORT
OF AN INVESTIGATION
INTO A MARINE CASUALTY
INVOLVING THE
“FV ELLIE ADHAMH”
OFF THE COAST OF CORK
ON OR ABOUT THE
26-28 MARCH 2021**

**REPORT NO. MCIB/308/INTERIM
(No.5 OF 2022)**

The Marine Casualty Investigation Board (MCIB) examines and investigates all types of marine casualties to, or on board, Irish registered vessels worldwide and other vessels in Irish territorial waters and inland waterways.

The MCIB objective in investigating a marine casualty is to determine its circumstances and its causes with a view to making recommendations for the avoidance of similar marine casualties in the future, thereby improving the safety of life at sea.

The MCIB is a non-prosecutorial body. We do not enforce laws or carry out prosecutions. It is not the purpose of an investigation carried out by the MCIB to apportion blame or fault.

The legislative framework for the operation of the MCIB, the reporting and investigating of marine casualties and the powers of MCIB investigators is set out in The Merchant Shipping (Investigation of Marine Casualties) Act, 2000.

In carrying out its functions the MCIB complies with the provisions of the International Maritime Organisation's Casualty Investigation Code and EU Directive 2009/18/EC governing the investigation of accidents in the maritime transport sector.

EU Directive 2009/18/EC governing the investigation of accidents in the maritime transport sector is transposed into Irish law by EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (MERCHANT SHIPPING) (INVESTIGATION OF ACCIDENTS) REGULATIONS 2011. Under Regulation 11(3) where the report into the investigation that comes within the Regulations, cannot be published within 12 months of the date of the casualty, the Board should publish an interim report within 12 months of the date of the casualty.

This is an interim report and no conclusions should be drawn from its contents.

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The Marine Casualty Investigation Board was established on the 25th March 2003 under the Merchant Shipping (Investigation of Marine Casualties) Act, 2000.

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1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The fishing vessel (FV) “*Ellie Adhamh*” with seven crew onboard was trawl fishing for prawns south of the Porcupine Bank in the approximate position 51° 30'N 014° 00'W approximately 160 nautical miles (NM) off the west coast of Cork. On Thursday 25 March 2021 at approximately 20.00 hours (hrs) the crew hauled the final trawl before returning to the vessel’s home port of Castletownbere in Bantry Bay when the vessel experienced an electrical power failure affecting the vessel’s Main Deck and Wheelhouse decks. The crew were unable to restore the normal power supply and the vessel’s emergency lighting and equipment operating systems reverted to being powered by the vessels Emergency 24-volt (V) direct current (DC) battery power supply arrangements. Despite this disabling condition the fishing vessel still had propulsion power and a limited steering capability. In company with another fishing vessel, “*FV Ellie Adhamh*” made course for Castletownbere at speed.
- 1.2 The 24V emergency battery power supply was of limited duration and at approximately 04.00 hrs the following morning (Friday 26 March) the batteries were exhausted causing the fishing vessels emergency 24V battery powered electrical operating systems to fail. As a consequence, the fishing vessels radio communications equipment, emergency lighting and the propulsion control (controllable pitch propeller (CPP)) systems all ceased operation and shut down. The fishing vessel lost forward propulsion and became adrift. The accompanying fishing vessel established a tow, but the towline parted shortly thereafter. By this time both vessels were approximately 55 NM from the homeport of Castletownbere. However, weather and sea conditions were deteriorating. At approximately 11.00 hrs the accompanying fishing vessel continued independently for Castletownbere for its own safety while the Skipper of the “*FV Ellie Adhamh*” made contact with the owner in order to arrange a tug to tow the disabled vessel to Castletownbere.
- 1.3 By this time, “*FV Ellie Adhamh*” was rolling heavily and taking seas into the Main Deck (also called the factory deck, or the ‘middle’ deck). The crew encountered difficulties in pumping overboard the shipped seawater which was coming aboard through a defective discard chute mechanism located on the port side, after section of that deck. The Skipper made contact with Valentia Coast Guard Radio and appraised them of the vessel’s worsening situation. At 16.41 hrs (on Friday 26 March) the Skipper activated the vessel’s Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB). A Search and Rescue (SAR) operation was commenced shortly thereafter at 16.47 hrs.
- 1.4 The following morning (Saturday 27 March) the Irish Coast Guard rescue helicopter R115 provided emergency salvage pumping equipment to the vessel and shortly afterwards the naval patrol vessel “*LE George Bernard Shaw*” established a towline to the stricken fishing vessel and commenced towing the fishing vessel to Castletownbere. However, the fishing vessel developed a significant list during

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the towing operation and the safety of the crew became a concern for the rescuers. At 18.55 hrs that evening the crew were airlifted from the listing vessel and brought to safety, ashore. The towline to the “*FV Ellie Adhamh*” broke at 19.22 hrs and the fishing vessel became adrift again. The following morning, tug “*Nomad*” arrived on scene (Sunday 28 March) but was unable to establish a tow line due to weather conditions. At 10:55 hrs, Sunday 28 March, the tug reported “*FV Ellie Adhamh*” had sunk off the Bull Rock on the west coast of Co. Cork.

Note: All times are local time = Universal Co-ordinated Time (UTC).



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