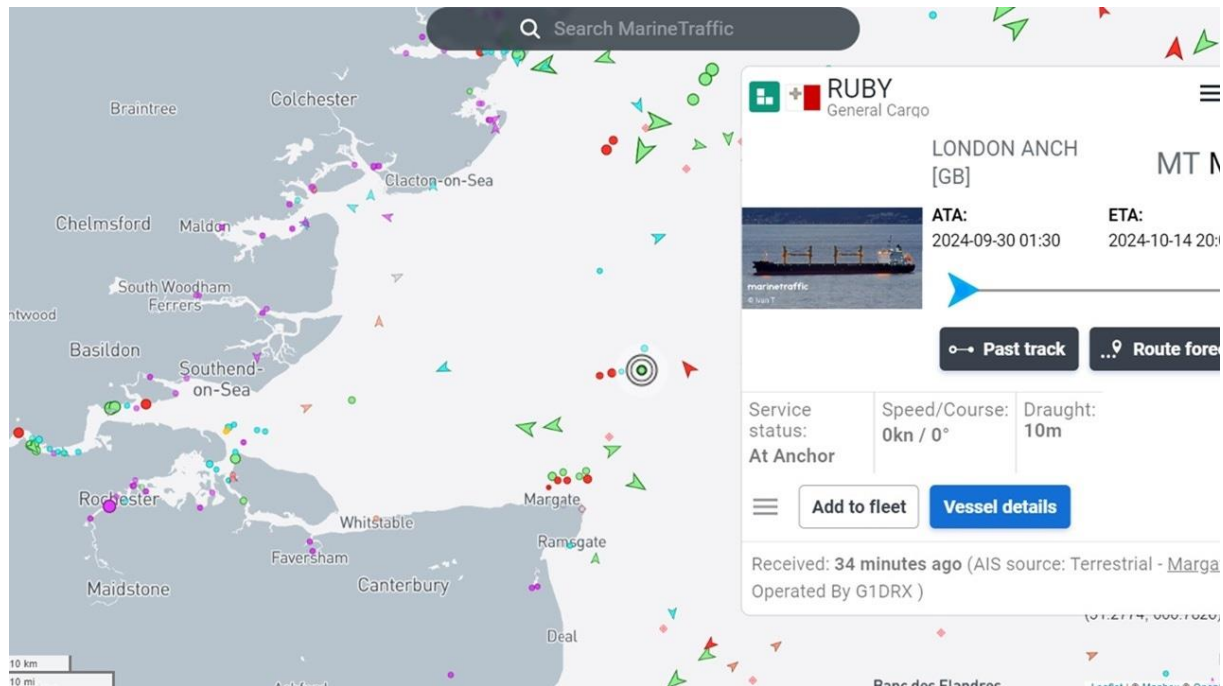


Confusion surrounds fate of stricken bulker Ruby off UK coast

The 12-year-old handymax bulker, Ruby, remains at anchor off the UK's Kent coast, laden with 20,000-tonnes of ammonium nitrate, and in need of repairs to her hull and propeller.

[Paul Bartlett](#), Correspondent

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MarineTraffic shows the Ruby at anchor on 18 OctoberCredit: MarineTraffic screenshot

The 37,039 dwt vessel has now been at anchor off the UK's south east coast for about three weeks. With a tug accompanying her and standing by since leaving Norwegian waters, she arrived in British waters during the last week of September. According to the UK's Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), she was refuelled while at anchor on 28 September. Stores and provisions were also taken on board at that time.

Despite assurances from the MCA and a spokesman for the managers and owners that the vessel is safe, the options for the ship's commercial managers, Dubai-based Serenity Ship Management DMCC and her owner, Malta-based Ruby Enterprises, look decidedly limited. Having undergone temporary repairs and then refuge in the Norwegian port of Tromsø for some days, authorities then asked her to leave.

The vessel sailed slowly south over the North Sea. But she was refused entry by a series of ports in various countries during the voyage to UK waters, eventually arriving off the Kent coast in the last week of September.

The ship loaded her cargo in the Russian port of Kandalaksha on 22 August but subsequently ran into heavy weather and is understood to have grounded and suffered damage to her hull and propeller. A Port State Control inspection in Tromsø, Norway, found the ship had a cracked hull, and reports indicated that seafarer employment agreements had expired and ISM-related deficiencies were noted.

Related: [Ruby owner blames media for ammonia nitrate offloading difficulty](#)

After refuelling, the vessel had been expected to head over the Bay of Biscay, accompanied by a tug, bound for the Mediterranean, her flag state Malta, and repairs in Malta Shipyards. Press reports on the island, however, have indicated that its maritime authorities refused permission for the vessel to enter Maltese waters, call in its port, or use its repair facilities.

However, according to the company spokesman, this is not the case. Responding to questions yesterday, the spokesman said: "This is untrue," adding that the vessel's managers are seeking a repair yard in the UK.

His comments followed responses from the MCA stating: "The vessel has appropriate safety certificates approved by the vessel's flag state and is able to make its own way. A commercial tug contracted by the ship operator is standing by the vessel at anchor and when underway. HM Coastguard is in regular contact with the vessel and is monitoring its progress."

Concern over the vessel has centred not only on her damaged hull and propeller but also on the nature of her cargo. Ammonium nitrate is considered by many port authorities as a very risky cargo if it is not handled carefully. This view is borne out by the massive explosion in the Port of Beirut in 2020 when 2,750 tonnes of the chemical, equivalent to just 15% of the Ruby's cargo, exploded and caused extensive damage.

However, if the ship is not allowed to dock and discharge her cargo, repairs to the hull and propeller cannot be carried out. So, for the moment, there appears to be an impasse.

A thought should be spared for the plight of the Master and the isolated crew of the stranded vessel.