



## ICIA Screening Questionnaire

### 1. Description of Proposal

The proposal is to introduce planned maintenance time into ferry timetables across the network, in line with the CHFS3 contractual commitment that all vessels are provided with sufficient scheduled time to undertake essential maintenance activities. This has been defined as either a minimum of 6 hours per week or one full day per month of dedicated maintenance time, incorporated within the published timetable.

The introduction of maintenance windows represents a change to previous operating arrangements under CHFS2, where such time was not formally required within timetables. As a result, this approach is being phased in across routes, with implementation tailored to individual service patterns, operational constraints and levels of demand.

The primary objective of the proposal is to improve the reliability and resilience of ferry services by enabling planned maintenance activities to be carried out safely and effectively. Modern vessels consist of thousands of individual components, many of which require regular inspection, servicing or repair. While some maintenance can be undertaken while vessels are in operation, a proportion of essential work can only be completed when the vessel is alongside and not in active service. Providing dedicated maintenance time allows defects to be addressed at an early stage, reducing the likelihood of escalation into more serious failures and avoiding unplanned cancellations or extended periods out of service.

The proposal also reflects wider operational requirements, including compliance with safety standards, statutory inspection regimes, and crew working time regulations. Without planned maintenance windows, maintenance and repair activity can place pressure on crew working hours, potentially leading to subsequent service disruption where vessels are required to be withdrawn to ensure compliance with rest requirements.

Implementation of maintenance windows will require adjustments to existing timetables and may result in a reduction of services on some routes. It may include changes to sailing frequency, timing, or daily service patterns, and will be developed on a route-by-route basis. In all cases, changes will be informed by demand analysis, operational data, and engagement with local communities and stakeholders, with the aim of minimising disruption and maintaining appropriate levels of connectivity. Where the introduction of maintenance time has the potential to affect service levels, options to mitigate impacts will be considered as part of the timetable development process.

### 2. Which community / area / route could be affected?

This screening questionnaire is being conducted for users of the Mallaig-Small Isles service.

### 3. Questions

#### Answer

#### Rationale/ Explanation / Decision

**Q1. Could the proposed change potentially impact an island community?**

Yes

- The proposal relates to ferry service timetables and the introduction of planned maintenance windows, which may affect sailing frequency and timing. As ferry services provide essential connectivity for island communities, including access to services, employment, education and freight, there is potential for impact.



3. Questions	Answer	Rationale/ Explanation / Decision
<p><b>Q2. Could this proposal affect island communities in a significantly different way to other islanders or customers of the service on the mainland</b></p>	<p>No</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The introduction of planned maintenance windows may result in some adjustments to sailing frequency and timing on certain routes.</li> <li>• This could affect aspects such as commuter travel, school transport, access to healthcare and other essential services, as well as the movement of freight and lifeline supplies. However, these changes will be developed on a route-by-route basis, informed by demand analysis and engagement with local communities, with the aim of minimising impacts on residents, key workers, and essential journeys.</li> <li>• While island communities are more reliant on ferry services and may be sensitive to changes affecting same-day travel, connectivity and service availability, the proposal is intended to improve overall service reliability and resilience. By enabling essential maintenance to be carried out in a planned way, it reduces the risk of unplanned breakdowns, cancellations and prolonged disruption, which can have more significant impacts on school travel, commuting, delivery of essential goods and access to services.</li> <li>• Potential impacts relating to capacity, accessibility, costs and the operation of lifeline services will be considered as part of timetable development, including maintaining appropriate provision for essential travel, freight and key user groups.</li> <li>• Overall, the proposal is expected to provide longer-term benefits through improved reliability and reduced disruption, and does not disproportionately disadvantage island communities compared to current arrangements.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Q3. To what extent could the proposed change potentially impact an island community?</b></p>	<p>2 - Low - Some difference for island communities, but the effect is small, localised or easily managed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Mallaig–Small Isles route provides essential lifeline connectivity for the islands of Eigg, Muck, Rum and Canna, supporting the movement of freight, people, and key services.</li> <li>• Freight is a primary dependency, with goods, equipment and supplies required to sustain daily life, local businesses and infrastructure development.</li> <li>• Agricultural/farming activity also relies on the service, including the seasonal movement of livestock and produce, with particular reliance noted on Muck. While these activities are important, the presence of a planned service timetable and agreed maintenance windows allows for forward planning, reducing the risk of significant disruption.</li> </ul>



3. Questions	Answer	Rationale/ Explanation / Decision
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthcare access requires island residents to travel to mainland centres such as Fort William or Inverness. Although the route is therefore important for accessing essential services, the continuation of scheduled sailings and publication of non-service days in advance helps ensure continuity of access and limits potential impacts.</li> <li>• Impacts on education are minimal, as primary education is provided on each island, and secondary pupils travel to and board on the mainland. These patterns are long-standing and are supported by the ferry timetable, meaning proposed changes are unlikely to materially affect access to education.</li> <li>• Tourism is a key economic driver across all of the Small Isles, with each island reliant on visitor income. In addition, there are planned developments that depend on ferry connectivity, including tourism expansion on Canna and renewable energy infrastructure projects on Eigg, both of which will require the transport of materials and equipment.</li> <li>• While these factors increase reliance on the service, the agreed maintenance arrangements mean that impacts are expected to be manageable.</li> <li>• Importantly, consultation has already taken place with local communities, and maintenance windows have been scheduled in agreement with stakeholders.</li> <li>• Overall, while the route is critical to the communities it serves, the planned and mitigated nature of the proposed changes means impacts on access to services, economic activity, and daily life are expected to be limited. As such, the impact is considered low.</li> </ul>

Outcome	Date Completed
No impact assessment needed	27/05/26