



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pressure on crew working hours, potentially leading to subsequent service disruption where vessels are required to be withdrawn to ensure compliance with rest requirements.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 Lochaline-Fishnish 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>Q2. Could this proposal affect island communities in a significantly different way to other islands or to users of the service who live on the mainland?</p>	<p>No</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction of planned maintenance windows may result in some adjustments to sailing frequency and timing on certain routes. • 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. • 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. • 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. • 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. It provides benefits in service reliability and resilience, and does not disproportionately disadvantage island communities compared to the existing arrangements.
<p>Q3. To what extent could the proposed change potentially impact an island community?</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"> • This route provides an important means of access to Mull and supports overall network resilience, particularly when the Oban–Craignure (main Mull) route is disrupted. While it plays a key role for a number of communities and users, it also operates within a broader network where alternative routes and travel options are available, allowing demand to be managed with a degree of flexibility when required. • The route accommodates a range of movements, including livestock transport to mainland markets and the conveyance of dangerous goods (DGs), which are not permitted on the Oban–Craignure service due to vessel constraints. These



3. Questions	Answer	Rationale/ Explanation / Decision
		<p>movements are regular and important to local and regional supply chains; however, they are typically planned in advance, allowing for some flexibility in scheduling and enabling operators to make use of available capacity across the wider network if necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to these essential movements, the service is used by local businesses and individuals undertaking same-day travel, often relying on early departures and later return sailings to access mainland services and carry out commercial activities. It can also provide an alternative for passengers unable to secure bookings on the Oban route. While the route is a primary and valued connection for some users, in many cases journeys can still be planned around alternative sailings or routes where required. • The introduction of maintenance windows may reduce some timetable flexibility and could require users to make adjustments to established travel patterns. However, given the ability to plan ahead and the presence of alternative routes, essential travel can continue to be accommodated. Any increases in journey times are expected to be relatively limited and can typically be managed through existing network options. • Overall, the route serves an important role for specific user groups while also contributing to the resilience of the wider ferry network. Its role in supporting healthcare access and onward travel connections is more limited than the main Mull route, and as a result, any impacts in these areas are expected to be modest and manageable within the context of available alternatives.

Outcome	Date Completed
No impact assessment required.	28/05/26