



## 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pressure on crew working hours, potentially leading to subsequent service disruption where vessels are required to be withdrawn to ensure compliance with rest requirements.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 Bernery-Leverburgh 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 islands or to users of the service who live 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> <li>•</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 Berneray-Leverburgh route is a key inter-island connection within the Western Isles, supporting access to healthcare, essential services, freight, and economic activity. It plays a particularly important role in enabling residents of Uist and Barra to access specialist healthcare services in Stornoway, including treatments such as dialysis, chemotherapy, diagnostics (e.g. CT scans and X-rays), maternity services, and orthopaedic care.</li> <li>• These journeys are often planned in advance, with block bookings already aligned to specific sailings (typically first and last sailings of the day), allowing sufficient time for onward travel. While this indicates a reliance on the route, the existing structured approach to scheduling helps minimise disruption.</li> </ul>



3. Questions	Answer	Rationale/ Explanation / Decision
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The route also supports wider healthcare logistics, including the transport of blood samples to Stornoway when air services are unavailable, and the regular movement of medical supplies, sterile equipment, and clinical waste between islands and NHS facilities. These movements are scheduled multiple times per week, and form part of established operational arrangements, allowing flexibility to accommodate planned service changes.</li> <li>• Freight and service movements are also significant, including the transport of food supplies for hospitals and care homes, and council waste and recycling services, which operate through daily block bookings for skip wagons travelling to processing facilities on Lewis.</li> <li>• In addition, there is inter-island travel by healthcare professionals (such as consultants, midwives, and dieticians) providing services across Uist and Barra. While these activities are essential, they are generally pre-arranged and can be planned around the published timetable and agreed maintenance windows.</li> <li>• The route also supports general commuting and local travel, as well as supply chains such as the shellfish industry, where timely onward movement to Stornoway is required.</li> <li>• Tourism is another important component, with the route forming part of the wider island travel network from the Butt of Lewis to Barra, contributing to the economies of communities across the Western Isles.</li> <li>• Although there are some sensitivities, such as limited alternative transport options (with the Benbecula-Stornoway air service operating only three times per week and not suitable for all users, particularly those with mobility constraints), and seasonal daylight restrictions reducing sailing flexibility in winter months, these are mitigated by the planned and predictable nature of ferry operations.</li> <li>• Overall, despite the route's importance in supporting healthcare access, essential services, and economic activity, the impacts from proposed changes are expected to be limited and manageable. As such, the impact is considered low.</li> </ul>

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

**Caledonian MacBrayne**  
Clyde & Hebridean Ferries

