



Service update

Vessel and service challenges between February and June



CONTEXT IN WHICH WE ARE OPERATING

As you know, delivering services in winter has grown increasingly challenging in recent years. This is due to a combination of factors, but in winter 2024/25 has been primarily due to a rising number of days in overhaul for ageing vessels.

This winter, vessels will spend a record number of days in annual maintenance. Before highlighting the specific issues, we're facing over the next couple of months, here is a reminder of the background against which we're delivering ferry services.

Annual overhaul

Virtually all of our major vessels are overhauled during the winter timetable period, between the end of October and the end of March. The exceptions are MV Isle of Arran, which enters overhaul in late September, and MV Finlaggan, which will enter overhaul in mid-April.

We have to schedule overhauls at this time to meet demand in summer. What it does mean, though, is that we have times during winter when, even if all overhauls run to schedule with no delays, there are constraints on the network. Our vessels are spending a record number of days in overhaul this winter.

For context, at the time of writing, MV Clansman and MV Isle of Lewis are delayed in annual overhaul, with the former now on going through alignment and trials before returning to service. MV Hebrides and MV Loch Frisa are due to enter overhaul imminently. We are at a time of year where we generally have to operate with at least two large vessels out of service for maintenance.

Retirement of MV Hebridean Isles

The vessel was retired in November. It has been highlighted previously that the cost and scale of work required would have meant that had we extended her service, she likely would have been unavailable for most of winter in a best-case scenario. Whilst it may not seem relevant several months on, the biggest impact has been that Islay has had a single vessel service all winter and her versatility in being able to operate on virtually all routes is missed.

Her replacement, MV Isle of Islay, will be with us soon and will add resilience to the network in future winters.

MV Caledonian Isles absence

The vessel has been out since January 2024, and though she is due to return, her continued absence is felt due to the capacity and frequency she offers Arran via Ardrossan-Brodrick.

This means approximately one third of our major fleet is unavailable. Despite that, we have been able to maintain services to all islands throughout winter.

EMERGING ISSUES

We are dealing with an exceptional set of circumstances where, against the backdrop outlined above, new, emergent issues have put significant pressure on capacity and services.

MV Isle of Lewis overhaul delay



We have identified the need for steel renewal in an area of the vessel. A repair plan has been agreed and approved by the certifier. This will add three weeks to her overhaul and delay her return to service.

Impact: The vessel was due to return to service on 28 February, but this has now been revised to 23 March.

MV Isle of Mull reduced passenger numbers

The vessel's Marine Evacuation System (MES) was condemned during overhaul and since then she has been operating with reduced foot passenger limit of 45 plus crew (usually 530).

Impact: Due to the vessel's age, we had to engage third parties to design a replacement MES and seek regulatory approval before it is fabricated and installed. This process is ongoing and the earliest date we can carry the works out is 1 April. This is based on delivery of the MES and engineer availability.

The vessel will require approximately four weeks off service for installation and testing, and it will not be possible to do this from 1 April due to constraints on the network. Therefore, we estimate the earliest date for the installation to start is 15 May. This is when MV Finlaggan should return from annual overhaul.

MV Caledonian Isles repairs

All steelworks are complete, but the scope of work for alignment has increased and we need to machine stern tubes and bearings.

Impact: Machining is estimated to take an additional two weeks and has to be carried out in dry dock. This means, rather than returning for the start of summer on 28 March, the vessel is now expected to be back in service by mid-April in a best-case scenario and 28 April in a worst-case scenario.

Arran's services will continue to be operated from Troon until MV Caledonian Isles returns. A two-vessel service, with MV Glen Sannox and MV Alfred, remains in place.

MV Finlaggan overhaul: MV Finlaggan's overhaul will be off-service for annual overhaul between 22 April and 13 May. We have consulted communities and reviewed data and have opted for Option 3 from that consultation. All services throughout her overhaul are published below.

Impact: We will have to redeploy vessels during this period to support Islay and wider network needs.

Vessel availability meaning no Campbeltown service: There will be no service between Ardrossan-Campbeltown this year due to vessel availability. MV Isle of Arran, which is the only major vessel trialled at Campbeltown and we know can operate there, is required elsewhere throughout April and May and as resilience later in summer for island communities. This is detailed below.

Finally, whilst not an emergent issue, we can confirm **MV Alfred** will stay with us until the end of May and she will continue to provide much needed resilience to services given the current challenges.

In isolation, we'd be able to manage any of the above issues without significant impact. Taken together, they have left us with no choice but to make some difficult decisions on vessel deployment and service over the next couple of months.



SERVICE IMPACT

Island/area	Route	Vessel deployment	Provisional dates
Arran	Troon–Brodick	MV Alfred & MV Isle of Arran	Until 3 Mar
		MV Glen Sannox & MV Alfred	4 Mar – 27 April
		MV Glen Sannox	From 28 April
	Ardrossan-Brodick	MV Caledonian Isles	From 28 April
	Claonaig-Lochranza	MV Catriona (combined with Tarbert – Portavadie)	Until 27 March
MV Catriona		From 28 March	
Barra	Oban-Castlebay	MV Isle of Mull (combined service with South Uist)	Until 22 March
		MV Isle of Lewis	From 23 March
	Sound of Barra	Additional sailings subject to crew availability	Until 22 March
Coll & Tiree	Oban – Coll/Tiree	MV Lord of the Isles	Until 7 April
		MV Clansman	From 8 April
Colonsay	Oban-Colonsay	MV Lord of the Isles	Until 7 April
		MV Clansman	From 8 April
Islay/Colonsay	Kennacraig-Islay-Colonsay	MV Finlaggan (Sat only)	Until 22 March
		MV Lord of the Isles (Wed & Sat)	29 March and 2 April
		MV Isle of Arran (Wed & Sat)	5 April -19 April
		MV Clansman (Wed & Sat)	23 April – 10 May
		MV Isle of Arran	From 11 May
Islay	Kennacraig-Islay	MV Finlaggan	Until 3 April
		MV Finlaggan & MV Isle of Arran	4 to 22 April
		MV Isle of Arran & MV Lord of the Isles	23 April -13 May
		MV Finlaggan & MV Isle of Arran	From 14 May
Lewis	Ullapool-Stornoway	MV Loch Seaforth	Always on route
Little Minch	Uig-Tarbert/Lochmaddy	MV Hebrides	Until 8 March
		MV Clansman	9 March – 6 April
		MV Hebrides	From 7 April
Mull	Oban-Craignure	MV Loch Frisa	Until 7 March
		MV Isle of Arran	8 March – 31 March
		MV Isle of Arran & MV Coruisk	1 & 2 April
		MV Loch Frisa & MV Coruisk	From 3 April until MV Isle of Mull replaced (then MV IoM & MV Loch Frisa)
	Lochaline-Fishnish	MV Lochinvar	Until 15 March



		MV Loch Fyne	16 March – 4 April
		MV Lochinvar	From 5 April
	Tobermory-Kilchoan	MV Loch Riddon	Until further notice
Skye	Mallaig-Armadale	MV Loch Nevis	Until 27 March
		MV Loch Bhrosda	From 28 March – 11 April
		MV Loch Fyne	From 12 April – 15 May
		MV Loch Fyne & MV Loch Bhrosda	From 16 May until MV Isle of Mull's MES replaced (then MV Coruisk & MV Loch Fyne)
South Uist	Oban-Lochboisdale	MV Isle of Mull (shared service with Barra)	Until 22 March
		MV Isle of Mull	23 March – 8 April
	Mallaig-Lochboisdale	MV Lord of the Isles	9 April – 22 April
		MV Isle of Mull – Operating to Oban	23 April – 14 May
		MV Lord of the Isles	From 15 May

MV Alfred is scheduled to be a resilience vessel when MV Caledonian Isles returns. Given the number of challenges we've outlined, this will be important to delivering services across the network. We are reviewing how she can be best deployed to support the network.

NEXT STEPS

Due to the volume of changes required to our systems, service amendments may not appear immediately. Customers may be able to book on sailings which subsequently change as we update our systems and they will be notified of any changes affecting them.

These changes will be phased in three groups as follows:

Phase 1:

Ardrossan-Brodick

Troon-Brodick

Kennacraig-Islay

Oban-Craignure

Little Minch

Phase 2:

Oban-Castlebay

Oban/Mallaig-Lochboisdale

Phase 3:

Colonsay



Oban-Coll/Tiree

Mallaig-Armadale

Sound of Barra

We cannot put specific dates on each phase and aim to complete as quickly as possible.

We appreciate there is a lot of information in this update, and your local Area Manager and colleagues from CalMac would be happy to meet you in the coming days to discuss the current challenges and service impacts further.

Please email your local Area Manager with any feedback on this document, and if you would like to meet.