



STRATEGIC TRANSPORT PROJECTS REVIEW

PROTECTING OUR CLIMATE
AND IMPROVING LIVES



Appendix I: Recommendation Appraisal Summary Tables

December 2022

Jacobs **AECOM**

1. Detailed Appraisal Summary

An 'Appendix I: Recommendation Appraisal Summary Tables (ASTs) Explanatory Note' accompanies this AST.

1.1. Recommendation 41 – Potential Sound of Harris, Sound of Barra fixed link and fixed link between Mull and Scottish mainland

Recommendation Description

STPR2 recommends that further work is undertaken on business cases to better understand the benefits, costs and challenges associated with a Sound of Harris fixed link, a Sound of Barra fixed link and a fixed link between Mull and the Scottish mainland. These studies would further consider the feasibility of improving island connectivity through additional fixed links by replacing existing ferry services currently delivered by CalMac Ferries Ltd as part of the [Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services \(CHFS\)](#) contract. These studies would also analyse in further detail the potential long-term savings associated with the public sector funding required to maintain the ferry services and involve input from communities that may potentially be affected.

1.2. Relevance

Relevant to CHFS routes serving the Sound of Harris, Sound of Barra and Mull

The current ferry routes on the Sound of Harris, Sound of Barra and between Mull and the Scottish mainland face a number of issues and challenges. Replacing ferry services with fixed links (bridges, causeways and/or tunnels) can improve reliability, connectivity, capacity and travel times and allow for the wider reconfiguration of ferry services.

A Sound of Harris fixed link would improve connectivity between the Uists and Lewis/Harris, whilst a Sound of Barra fixed link would improve connectivity between Barra and the Uists. The provision of these fixed links would also allow for the reconfiguration of transport provision within the Outer Hebrides and to the Scottish mainland.

The main Mull ferry route (Craignure to Oban) is one of the most popular and most capacity constrained routes for vehicles on the CHFS ferry network and the service is forecast to continue to have challenges with vehicle deck capacity. The provision of a fixed link between Mull and the Scottish mainland would improve connectivity and also allow for the reconfiguration of transport provision between the island and the mainland.

1.3. Estimated Cost

£1,001 million - £2,500 million

The scope of this recommendation is to undertake further work to better understand the benefits, costs and challenges associated with a Sound of Harris fixed link, a Sound of Barra fixed link and a fixed link between Mull and the Scottish mainland.

The estimated cost of undertaking further work would be significantly lower than the threshold of the cost band within which it is placed. However, while further costing analysis is required, an overall high-level cost of £1.29 billion has been estimated at this time to implement these three fixed links.

1.4. Position in Sustainable Investment Hierarchy

Targeted infrastructure improvements

This recommendation would also contribute to four of the 12 NTS2 outcomes, as follows:

- Provide fair access to services we need;
- Be easy to use for all;
- Get people and goods to where they need to get to; and
- Be safe and secure for all.

1.5. Summary Rationale

Summary of Appraisal

	TPO					STAG					SIA				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Low Scenario	0	+	++	++	+++	--	0	+	++	++	--	++	+++	0	++
High Scenario	0	+	++	++	+++	--	0	+	++	++	--	++	+++	0	++

This recommendation has a varying performance against the suite of STPR2 appraisal criteria. It contributes positively to the majority of the Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs), particularly in relation to supporting health and wellbeing, sustainable inclusive growth and reliability and resilience of the strategic transport system. In terms of the STAG criteria, this recommendation is expected to have a moderate positive impact against aspects of Economy and Equality and Accessibility. This recommendation would also have moderate positive impacts in terms of the Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) and Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment (FSDA) with a major positive impact in terms of the Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA).

However, this recommendation would also have moderate negative effects in terms of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

Details behind this summary are discussed in Section 3, below.

2. Context

2.1 Problems and Opportunities

This recommendation could help to address the following problems and opportunities:

Relevant Problem & Opportunity Themes Identified in National Case for Change

- **Social Isolation:** there is increasing recognition of social isolation and loneliness as major public health issues that can have significant impacts on physical and mental wellbeing. Disabled people in particular can feel trapped due to a lack of accessible transport, particularly on islands and in remote and rural areas.
- **Scotland's Regional Differences:** transport challenges differ across Scotland. Rural households tend to drive more frequently than urban households. The lack of public transport in rural areas acts as a barrier for young people accessing education, training and employment and is linked to long-term out-migration. Similar to remote and rural areas, transport can have an adverse impact on the long-term sustainability of island communities.
- **Productivity:** whilst Scotland's productivity level is not solely driven by the efficiency of its transport system, improvements in transport connectivity between businesses reduces costs and increases productivity, thus generating higher levels of economic growth.
- **Resilience:** a key challenge is providing a transport system that is resilient and speedily recovers from disruption, thus minimising impacts of delayed journeys on networks and users.
- **Service Capacity:** the capacity of transport services can be a key challenge: rail station capacity; rail network capacity; Park and Ride capacity for stations; freight capacity by rail and ferry; passenger capacity for ferries including for inter-island services. This has a strong indirect or implicit linkage to issues around affordability, accessibility, connectivity and congestion.
- **Vessel and Vehicle Quality:** there are linkages between vessel and vehicle quality and issues relating to resilience, reliability and safety, which can result in cancellations and leave users unable to complete their journey.

2.2 Interdependencies

This recommendation has potential overlap with other STPR2 recommendations and would also complement other areas of Scottish Government activity.

Other STPR2 Recommendations

- Supporting integrated journeys at ferry terminals (18);
- Ferry vessel renewal and replacement, and progressive decarbonisation (24); and
- Investment in port infrastructure to support vessel renewal and replacement, and progressive decarbonisation (42).

Other areas of Scottish Government activity:

- [Revised Draft Fourth National Planning Framework \(Revised Draft NPF4\)](#) ; North and West Coast and Islands Regional Spatial Priorities;
- [Islands Growth Deal](#) ;
- [The National Islands Plan, 2019](#) ; and
- Islands Connectivity Plan (emerging).

3. Appraisal

This section provides an assessment of the recommendation against:

- STPR2 Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs);
- STAG criteria.
- Deliverability criteria; and
- Statutory Impact Assessment criteria.

The seven-point assessment scale has been used to indicate the impact of the recommendation when considered under the ‘Low’ and ‘High’ Transport Behaviour Scenarios (which are described in Appendix F of the Technical Report).

3.1. Transport Planning Objectives

1. A sustainable strategic transport system that contributes significantly to the Scottish Government’s net zero emissions target

Low Scenario	High Scenario
0	0

The implementation of a potential Sound of Harris, Sound of Barra fixed link and a fixed link between Mull and the Scottish mainland would result in an increase in vehicle kilometres travelled by the release of suppressed demand and the induction of additional traffic with an associated temporary increase in greenhouse gas emissions though this would depend on the speed of decarbonisation of road vehicles and the timing of these completed constructions (which could potentially be closer to 2045 than now). The fixed links would increase the frequency at which typical trips are made and would be expected to induce trips that may not have otherwise been made when ferry services provided the principal transport connections. This would be negated to some degree by removing emissions generated by the existing vessels. Further analysis would be necessary to understand the benefits of removing ferry services from the CHFS ferry network and the effect this would also have on traffic levels at ports/ferry terminals, though in the case of Mull, it is noted that Oban can suffer from ‘ferry related’ congestion and related emissions at certain times of the day when ferries arrive from Mull and vehicles decant in large platoons onto the town centre transport network.

This recommendation is expected to have a neutral impact on this objective in both the Low and High scenarios.

2. An inclusive strategic transport system that improves the affordability and accessibility of public transport.

Low Scenario	High Scenario
+	+

The implementation of a potential Sound of Harris, Sound of Barra fixed link and a fixed link between Mull and the Scottish mainland would have a moderate positive impact on public transport accessibility, by removing constraints and limitations of ferry services where they are the principal transport connections.

For the Sound of Harris, this would provide enhanced opportunities for planning connections by public transport between the centre and south of the Outer Hebrides and Stornoway (the constraints on the current ferry service are noted as causing difficulties for those planning connecting bus services).

For the Sound of Barra, this would provide enhanced opportunities for planning connections by public transport to and from Barra and other parts of the Outer Hebrides.

For Mull, this would provide enhanced opportunities for bus services to run between the island and the Scottish mainland.

However, the extent to which accessibility and connectivity benefits would be realised would depend on the provision and availability of public transport services using the fixed links. Transport and travel has the potential to become more affordable for those using the fixed links – depending on how the fixed links are funded.

This recommendation is expected to have a minor positive impact on this objective in both the Low and High scenarios.

3. A cohesive strategic transport system that enhances communities as places, supporting health and wellbeing.

Low Scenario	High Scenario
++	++

The implementation of a potential Sound of Harris, Sound of Barra fixed link and a fixed link between Mull and the Scottish mainland would offer much improved levels of connectivity that afford people more choice or greater accessibility with regard to the places they want to travel to and the activities they wish to undertake. Having unrestricted access rather than having to plan activities around the booking of a ferry

service offers a much improved level of connectivity and would also support health and wellbeing.

For the Sound of Harris, the fixed link would promote enhanced ability to make journeys across the Outer Hebrides, for example from the islands in the south to the major population, employment and service centre at Stornoway, and vice versa.

For the Sound of Barra, the fixed link would promote enhanced ability to make journeys across the Outer Hebrides, for example South Uist (Lochboisdale) to Barra (Castlebay) and vice versa as well as increasing opportunities for both communities to access services to the Scottish mainland.

For Mull, the fixed link would promote enhanced ability to make journeys to Mull from the Scottish mainland and vice versa. At the same time, it would significantly alter the levels of traffic to and from the island which would bring the positive benefits of increased connectivity but potentially also several negative impacts to those communities affected including the health and wellbeing of residents. A fixed link would permanently change the fabric of the island and may lead to a perception of eroded island identity (as well as negative impacts associated with increased vehicle traffic levels on island roads). However, it was observed in the case of the Skye Bridge Socio Economic Impact Study that local communities felt they had retained their island identity, though tourist surveys identified that some people felt that “island identity” had been lost (with removal of the tolls).

There would also be positive impacts on the wellbeing of island residents associated with improved connectivity increasing the ability for people to visit friends and relatives.

This recommendation is expected to have a moderate positive impact on this objective in both the Low and High scenarios.

4. An integrated strategic transport system that contributes towards sustainable inclusive growth in Scotland.

Low Scenario	High Scenario
++	++

The implementation of a potential Sound of Harris, Sound of Barra fixed link and a fixed link between Mull and the Scottish mainland would provide resilient links which could fundamentally change connectivity for the communities served through reduced journey times, for example, or the ability to travel to new locations for work and other social and economic purposes. This could have a significant impact on how communities develop in the future: creation of island jobs, the ability for businesses to take up opportunities elsewhere that was not possible before and new

opportunities for tourism, all of which enable communities to remain sustainable and experience inclusive growth. Reduced freight costs would also be anticipated for exporting goods from islands and for importing goods to islands from the Scottish mainland.

Improving connections to Lewis and Harris would enable the growth of Stornoway as a service centre for the Outer Hebrides and reduce the need for residents of other islands in the Outer Hebrides archipelago to travel to the Scottish mainland.

Improving connections to South Uist and Barra could enable the growth of Lochboisdale and/or Castlebay as service centres and reduce the need for residents of South Uist and Barra to travel to the Scottish mainland (to Mallaig or Oban).

However, further work would be needed to gauge the potential impact of leakage from local economies for Mull, with the Scottish mainland becoming more accessible.

This recommendation is expected to have a moderate positive impact on this objective in both the Low and High scenarios.

5. A reliable and resilient strategic transport system that is safe and secure for users.

Low Scenario	High Scenario
+++	+++

The implementation of a potential Sound of Harris, Sound of Barra fixed link and a fixed link between Mull and the Scottish mainland would remove issues associated with ferry service operation as it would be anticipated that there would be fewer occasions on which the fixed links were closed compared with occasions when the ferry services were cancelled, resulting in more reliable and resilient connections.

An increase in the number of vehicle kilometres travelled in the Outer Hebrides or related to journeys starting or ending in Mull associated with the introduction of these fixed links would be anticipated (thus increasing the potential for road traffic collisions). The Mull fixed link would however remove a certain level of road traffic from Oban town centre and each fixed link would remove any safety issues associated with the movement of traffic and pedestrians at ferry terminals. Perceptions of security could be influenced by any fixed link design elements (for example, tunnels having adequate lighting and causeways having adequate protection against storms and seas). This would ensure that the needs of pedestrians and cyclists would be factored into the design process.

This recommendation is expected to have a major positive impact on this objective in both the Low and High scenarios.

3.2. STAG Criteria

1. Environment	
Low Scenario	High Scenario
--	--

See Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) below.

This recommendation is expected to have a moderate negative effect on this criterion in both the Low and High scenarios.

2. Climate Change	
Low Scenario	High Scenario
0	0

The implementation of a potential Sound of Harris, Sound of Barra fixed link and a fixed link between Mull and the Scottish mainland would result in an increase in vehicle kilometres travelled. The fixed links would increase the frequency at which typical trips are made and would be expected to induce trips that may not have otherwise been made when ferry services provided the principal transport connections. However, this would be negated to some degree by removing emissions generated by the existing vessels. Further analysis would be necessary to understand the benefits of removing ferry services from the CHFS ferry network and the effect this would also have on traffic levels at ports/ferry terminals, though in the case of Mull, it is noted that Oban can suffer from ‘ferry related’ congestion and related emissions at certain times of the day when ferries arrive from Mull and vehicles decant in large platoons onto the town centre transport network.

The fixed links could result in an increase in motorised traffic within the Outer Hebrides archipelago, and to and from the mainland (in the case of Mull), which may have a negative effect on climate change by increasing greenhouse gas emissions. However, there are also likely to be minor positive effects on climate change resilience (vulnerability to effects of climate change), as they would help adapt the transport network to the direct / indirect risks associated with climate change (potential to adapt to effects of climate change), and maintain / improve access to and within isolated island communities that are at risk from climate change effects.

This recommendation is expected to have a neutral impact on this criterion in both the Low and High scenarios.

3. Health, Safety and Wellbeing

Low Scenario	High Scenario
+	+

The implementation of a potential Sound of Harris, Sound of Barra fixed link and a fixed link between Mull and the Scottish mainland would have a minor negative impact on accidents as the introduction of additional road capacity increases the potential for an increase in road traffic collisions. The Mull fixed link would however remove any safety issues associated with the movement of traffic and pedestrians at ferry terminals.

Perceptions of security could be influenced by any fixed link design elements (for example tunnels having adequate lighting). This would ensure that the needs of pedestrians and cyclists would be factored into the design process.

No significant impacts on health are anticipated as a result of the implementation of the fixed links. However, there would be a minor positive impact on access to health and wellbeing infrastructure by increasing accessibility to, for example, Stornoway (from communities in the south of the Outer Hebrides) and the Scottish mainland (from Mull). There would also be positive impacts on the wellbeing of island residents associated with improved connectivity increasing the ability for people to visit friends and relatives.

The implementation of a potential Sound of Harris, Sound of Barra fixed link and a fixed link between Mull and the Scottish mainland has the potential for negative effects on visual amenity during construction and operation of the fixed links.

This recommendation is expected to have a minor positive impact on this criterion in both the Low and High scenarios.

4. Economy

Low Scenario	High Scenario
++	++

The implementation of a potential Sound of Harris, Sound of Barra fixed link and a fixed link between Mull and the Scottish mainland would provide resilient links which could fundamentally change connectivity for the communities served through reduced journey times, for example, or the ability to travel to new locations for work and other social and economic purposes. This could have a significant impact on how communities develop in the future: creation of island jobs, the ability for businesses to take up opportunities elsewhere that was not possible before and new opportunities for tourism, all of which enable communities to remain sustainable and

experience inclusive growth. Reduced freight costs would also be anticipated for exporting goods from islands and for importing goods to islands from the Scottish mainland.

Further work is needed as part of business case development to capture the main impacts of these fixed links in terms of economic welfare, with additional analysis required to determine the main costs and benefits.

Further work is needed as part of business case development to capture the wider economic impacts of these fixed links.

Improving connections to Lewis and Harris would enable the growth of Stornoway as a service centre and reduce the need for residents of other islands in the Outer Hebrides archipelago to travel to the Scottish mainland.

Improving connections to South Uist and Barra could enable the growth of Lochboisdale and Castlebay as service centres and reduce the need for residents of South Uist and Barra to travel to the Scottish mainland (to Mallaig or Oban).

For Mull however, with the Scottish mainland becoming more accessible, further work would be needed to gauge the potential impact of leakage from local economies.

This recommendation is expected to have a moderate positive impact on this criterion in both the Low and High scenarios.

5. Equality and Accessibility

Low Scenario	High Scenario
++	++

The implementation of a potential Sound of Harris, Sound of Barra fixed link and a fixed link between Mull and the Scottish mainland would have a minor positive impact on public transport network coverage, by removing constraints and limitations of ferry services where they are the principal transport connections.

For the Sound of Harris, this would provide enhanced opportunities for planning connections by public transport between the centre and south of the Outer Hebrides and Stornoway (the constraints on the current ferry service are noted as causing difficulties for those planning connecting bus services).

For the Sound of Barra, this would provide enhanced opportunities for planning connections by public transport to and from Barra and other parts of the Outer Hebrides.

For Mull, this would provide enhanced opportunities for bus services to run between the island and the Scottish mainland.

However, the extent to which accessibility and connectivity benefits would be realised would depend on the provision and availability of public transport services using the fixed links. The impacts on exclusion of non-motorised users (those without access to a vehicle to utilise the fixed links) would require further assessment.

This recommendation would have a neutral impact on active travel network coverage overall. While causeways would increase cyclability of journeys between islands (for example in the Outer Hebrides), a fixed link tunnel would potentially preclude active travel movements on safety grounds.

A Sound of Harris fixed link could help address issues of peripherality (and social exclusion associated with this) and make Stornoway – as a key service centre – more accessible from communities in the south. This would promote enhanced access to health care, education, shops/retail and leisure activities for example.

A Sound of Barra fixed link could help address issues of peripherality (and social exclusion associated with this) – and make South Uist (Lochboisdale) more accessible from Barra (Castlebay) and vice versa.

A fixed link between Mull and the Scottish mainland would address issues of peripherality (and social exclusion associated with this). This would promote enhanced access to health care, education, shops/retail and leisure activities in, for example, Oban.

Transport and travel has the potential to become more affordable for those using the fixed links – depending on how the fixed links are funded.

Also refer to EqIA/ICIA/FSDA/CRWIA Assessment in the next section.

This recommendation is expected to have a moderate positive impact on this criterion in both the Low and High scenarios.

3.3. Deliverability

1. Feasibility

Overall, the introduction of fixed links would likely have risks associated with its implementation – further work on business cases is required to better understand the benefits, costs and challenges associated with fixed links across the Sound of Harris, the Sound of Barra and between Mull and the Scottish mainland.

2. Affordability

Further studies and feasibility assessments would be required to ascertain the whole life costs of these fixed links. It is, however, clear that the upfront capital would be significant with ongoing operational costs also required (albeit significantly lower than the current ferry services require). However, the upfront capital costs would be offset, over the (very) long-term with savings to the CHFS ferry network. Whilst significant development work would require to be undertaken to determine the costs of investment, with cognisance also being taken of the payback period, it is

anticipated that there would be major negative impacts on affordability during the period of construction.

An overall high-level cost of £1.29 billion has been estimated at this time to implement these three fixed links.

3. Public Acceptability

There would be a minor positive impact overall associated with the implementation of a potential Sound of Harris, Sound of Barra fixed link in terms of public acceptability, particularly where communities are afforded new (or improved) opportunities to reach destinations such as Stornoway and Lochboisdale more easily.

Furthermore, in a [2021 committee paper, Western Isles Council noted](#) that: “during consultation on the LTS, there was no indication of support for fixed links between the Outer Hebrides and mainland Scotland. There was, however, interest in fixed links across the Sound of Harris and the Sound of Barra, which is reflected in the high priority action within the LTS of; ‘a high-level review of connectivity across the two Sounds, considering economic impacts and whole life costs’”.

There may be a degree of public acceptability risk if there is a perception that there would be potential erosion of island identity with the onset of fixed link connections across the Sound of Harris and Sound of Barra.

There would similarly be a minor positive impact overall associated with the introduction of a fixed link between Mull and the Scottish mainland in terms of public acceptability, particularly where communities are afforded new (or improved) opportunities to reach the Scottish mainland. There may be a degree of public acceptability risk if there is a perception that there would be potential erosion of island identity with the onset of a fixed link connection to Mull.

Detailed consultation with local communities would be required as part of business case development to fully gauge anticipated impacts of these fixed links.

3.4. Statutory Impact Assessment Criteria

1. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Low Scenario	High Scenario
--	--

A fixed link within the Outer Hebrides archipelago, and/or a fixed link between Mull and the Scottish mainland is likely to result in positive effects on the SEA objective related to quality of life (Objective 4) due to improved accessibility and reduced severance. The fixed links are also likely to result in positive effects on achieving a sustainable transport network (Objective 8) through supporting plans for future capacity of public transport, taking demographic and other societal changes into

account.

The recommendation is also likely to result in minor positive effects on climate adaptation (Objective 2) as the fixed links would help adapt the transport network to the direct / indirect risks associated with climate change and maintain / improve access to and within isolated island communities at risk from climate change effects.

The implementation of a Sound of Harris fixed link and a Sound of Barra fixed link and/or a fixed link between Mull and the Scottish mainland has the potential for negative effects on SEA objectives related to greenhouse gas emissions (Objective 1) and air quality (Objective 3) due to the potential for an increase in motorised traffic within the Outer Hebrides archipelago, and to and from the mainland respectively. There are also likely to be significant carbon impacts associated with the construction process, construction traffic and construction materials.

Negative effects are also anticipated on natural resource usage, the water environment, biodiversity, soil, cultural heritage and landscape and visual amenity (Objectives 9 to 14) during construction and operation of the fixed links due to the introduction of new infrastructure into the marine and coastal environment, the scale of the infrastructure proposed and the proximity to multiple environmental designations. In relation to a fixed link between Mull and the Scottish mainland these designated areas include multiple Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Marine Protected Areas (MPA); together with Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS), Local Landscape Designations (LLD), Landscape Character Areas (LCA) and a National Scenic Area (NSA).

In relation to the Sound of Harris fixed link the constraints include the Inner Hebrides and Minches SAC, West Coast of the Outer Hebrides SPA, North Uist Machair and Islands Ramsar and SPA, North Harris Mountains SPA, South Lewis, Harris and North Uist NSA and Ruisgarry historic Conservation Area; and in relation to the Sound of Barra fixed link they include the West Coast of the Outer Hebrides SPA, Sound of Barra SAC, Inner Hebrides and the Minches SAC, Machair LCA and Prominent Hills and Mountains LCA.

As is standard with marine infrastructure developments, further environmental assessment would be required to identify location-specific environmental effects and mitigation where appropriate.

The recommendation has no (or negligible) clear relationship to the achievement of SEA Objectives 5 (noise and vibration), 6 (high quality places) or 7 (safety).

This recommendation is expected to have a moderate negative effect on this criterion in both the Low and High scenarios.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Low Scenario	High Scenario
++	++

The implementation of a potential Sound of Harris, Sound of Barra fixed link and a fixed link between Mull and the Scottish mainland would address geographic inequalities through an increase in connectivity and access to key services such as health and education as well as supporting job growth on the islands through larger travel to work areas. These are benefits that can be shared by groups with protected characteristics. However, the extent to which accessibility and connectivity benefits would be shared amongst all of those with protected characteristics would further be influenced by the provision, availability and affordability of public transport services using the fixed links. Furthermore, the extent to which job growth on the islands would support those from protected characteristics groups would depend on the sustainability and inclusivity of the employment opportunities created.

This recommendation is expected to have a moderate positive impact on this criterion in both the Low and High scenarios.

3. Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA)

Low Scenario	High Scenario
+++	+++

A potential Sound of Harris, Sound of Barra fixed link and a fixed link between Mull and the Scottish mainland would have a moderate positive impact by improving connectivity and accessibility and reducing reliance on the CHFS ferry network.

The Sound of Harris fixed link would have a positive impact on islands located in the south of the Outer Hebrides archipelago – as access to Lewis and Harris would be enhanced. This would enable residents (and visitors) to access key service centres in Stornoway and may negate the requirement to travel to the Scottish mainland for key activities, for example using the Lochboisdale – Oban or Skye ferry services.

For the Sound of Barra fixed link, improving connections to South Uist and Barra could enable the growth of Lochboisdale and Castlebay as service centres and reduce the need for residents of South Uist and Barra to travel to the Scottish mainland (to Mallaig or Oban).

The links in the Outer Hebrides may also afford island residents better access to employment opportunities, which may arrest recent reductions in population in, for example, North Uist and South Uist.

The Mull fixed link would have a positive impact as access to the Scottish mainland would be enhanced. However, with the Scottish mainland becoming more

accessible, further work would be needed to gauge the potential impact of leakage from local economies.

Bringing synergy with ICIA guidance, the fixed links would support the sustaining of strong, resilient and vibrant communities.

This recommendation is expected to have a major positive impact on this criterion in both the Low and High scenarios.

4. Children’s Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA)

Low Scenario	High Scenario
0	0

The implementation of a potential Sound of Harris, Sound of Barra fixed link and a fixed link between Mull and the Scottish mainland is likely to have a neutral impact on children and young people overall. Improved access and connectivity would result in better opportunities to access education, health and employment as well as sporting, cultural and leisure activities. The construction activities associated with new fixed links could have adverse impacts on children and young people who are more vulnerable to air quality, noise and severance related effects such as higher traffic volumes or construction works. Additionally, an increase in motorised traffic when operational could potentially have a negative impact on children as they are more vulnerable to the adverse health impacts of increased emissions as well as other issues such as road safety and accessibility caused by increased traffic flows. However, it is likely that as a significant proportion of vehicles are likely to be electric by the time the fixed links were operational then air quality effects could be limited. More detailed assessment would be needed to understand impacts at the local level.

This recommendation is expected to have a neutral impact on this criterion in both the Low and High scenarios.

5. Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment (FSDA)

Low Scenario	High Scenario
++	++

Improving links to/from island and remote/rural communities enables residents there to have more equitable and fairer access to opportunities and facilities, as compared with people living on the Scottish mainland or in urban areas, for example.

This recommendation is expected to have a moderate positive impact on this criterion in both the Low and High scenarios