



International Conference

Lighthouse Tourism & Maritime Heritage

"Beyond the Horizon: Charting a Collective Vision for Coastal Communities and Lighthouse Destinations invoking Innovation, Nature and Heritage"

Dublin Castle, 7th and 8th October 2025

Hosted by Irish Lights in partnership with IALA and national and international tourism, lighthouse and maritime heritage agencies and bodies.



Visitors at Black Head Lighthouse, Co Antrim

CONTEXT

In October 2025, Irish Lights will host the IALA Sustainability Workshop (6th 10th October) followed by IALA Eng week (13th – 17th October).

These two significant IALA events coincide with Ireland's plans to host a major international conference to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Great Lighthouses of Ireland initiative. Since its establishment in 2015, the combined effort of many partners has ensured that lighthouse visitor experiences are a valued asset for the island of Ireland. In 2022 more than 360,000 people visited Irish lighthouses and overnight stays at lighthouses have increased by 60 per cent since 2019.

This international Lighthouse Tourism & Maritime Heritage Conference 2025 will showcase lighthouse tourism internationally and provide a platform for tourism and heritage players and IALA members to share insights and inspiration, with a focus on the future of lighthouse tourism and its impact on heritage and economy.

The conference will intertwine various ideas and initiatives to form a unified vision for the future growth and sustainability of coastal communities and destinations.

The results of recent international research, case studies, and examples of future ambition and international practices, will be delivered by leading international experts.

Tourism leaders, design and interpretive planners will demonstrate how lighthouses can transcend their traditional role as navigational aids. They can serve as cultural beacons that shed light on our rich maritime history, contribute to the broader destination appeal, and foster local tourism and community development.

This conference offers a unique opportunity for leaders, advocates and practitioners from various national and international, public, private, community organisations to collectively consider a path towards a prosperous sustainable future that respects the past while fostering innovation.

The programme is designed to allow all have the opportunity to network with existing and future partners, discuss and explore new opportunities and collaborations for future development and shared success.

CONFERENCE SESSIONS AND TOPICS

7th October 2025

Session 1: Vision and Ambition – Designing Lighthouse Experiences to Drive Coastal Community Development and Economic Growth

This opening keynote session will delve into the role of brand led design in the creation of outstanding visitor experiences. **A panel of international speakers and leaders will share their examples of how innovative and social entrepreneurial creativity fosters community cohesion, placemaking and economic upliftment.**

It will set the scene to allow all to explore how the projects associated with Lighthouse Tourism and Heritage can become icons and exemplars in delivering compelling regeneration projects emphasizing the importance of shared outcomes and legacy.

- **Lighthouses as Opportunities for Sustainable & Regenerative Tourism**
 - Exploring the creation of sustainable experiences and social enterprise as an economic engine for coastal communities
- **Harnessing the power of Design lead Master Planning**
 - Coastal Culture and Heritage Regeneration
 - Placemaking and unlocking interpretive themes
- **Community Engagement**
 - Fostering Pride of Place and local communities in development, lighthouse storytelling and cultural events.
 - Building networks of ambassadors and passionate volunteers
- **Economic Impact:**
 - Funding and supporting development
 - Assessing the economic contribution of lighthouse tourism to local economies.
 - Strategies for positioning lighthouses as hubs and economic engines

Session 2: Harnessing the Power of Interpretation and Storytelling

Building on the importance of design and creativity this session will explore the transformative power of interpretation. Speakers and experts will highlight how we can discover the enduring value and significance of our shared lighthouse heritage and culture. Examples and case studies will share concepts and tools that deliver fulfilling experiences that inspire, entertain, educate, leave a lasting impression and make a difference.

- **Compelling Themes and Stories**

- Supporting innovation within and for communities
- Storytelling mediums and impact
- The role of technology in enhancing the visitor experience.
- Opportunities and challenges associated with AI

- **Archive and Heritage Centres / Museums**

- Unlocking the rich resource of our Lighthouse archives, not just for the history of our marine Aids to Navigation, but for the social, political, maritime and engineering history.

- **Art and Culture**

- Artistic collaborations and interpretations
- Lighthouses in literature, film, and other media.
- Curating workshops and seminars on maritime history and navigation.

8th October 2025

Session 3: International Comparators and Examples

- **International Collaboration**

- Highlighting best practices and success stories from lighthouse projects around the world.
- Building partnerships for global lighthouse tourism and heritage impact.
- Sharing resources and leanings

- E.g. Korea / Trinity House / NLB / Australia / India
- European Route of Lighthouses

Session 4: Protecting Built and Natural Heritage at Lighthouse Destinations

- **Conservation and Preservation – Built Heritage**

- UNESCO Heritage Designations – what can we learn
- Ensuring the structural integrity and safety of historic lighthouses.
- Restoration techniques and funding for lighthouse conservation.
- Research and Innovation

- **Conservation and Preservation – Natural Heritage**

- National and International Obligations
- Nature designations
- Protecting and managing nature and biodiversity.
- Research and Innovation
- Site management options
- Communicating with the Public

STAKEHOLDERS AND DELEGATES: The conference will be hosted and delivered by Irish Lights and its partners with support from relevant tourism agencies, maritime and heritage partners.

Venue: Dublin Castle, Ireland



Delegates will include IALA members, Lighthouse tourism operators, local authority stakeholders, tourism and heritage agencies, marine and maritime collaborators from national and international contacts.

It is expected that over 250 participants will register for the event.

For international guests – conference pack may include a number of pre and post Great Lighthouses of Ireland experiences and packages which will be available to purchase online via the conference portal.

June 2024