

# Special Feature

## SAFETY AT SEA

### Commissioners of Irish Lights

When you visit the Irish coast, it is likely you will come across either a lighthouse, a beacon or a buoy. These are known as 'aids to navigation' (AtoN) and are used for guiding marine traffic or warning about dangers or hazards in coastal waters. The people who look after these aids to navigation are the Commissioners of Irish Lights. They are a maritime organisation, providing an essential safety service around the coast.

Though they provide and maintain many of these aids, the Commissioners of Irish Light also help to set up and maintain local aids to navigation which have been provided by local authorities in ports, harbours and along the coastline.

By looking after all these lights, beacons and buoys, the Commissioners of Irish Lights are helping to protect the marine environment and support the marine industry and coastal communities. [www.irishlights.ie](http://www.irishlights.ie)

The beacon on Long Island, which is off shore from Schull in West Cork. The Fastnet Rock lighthouse is in the distance.

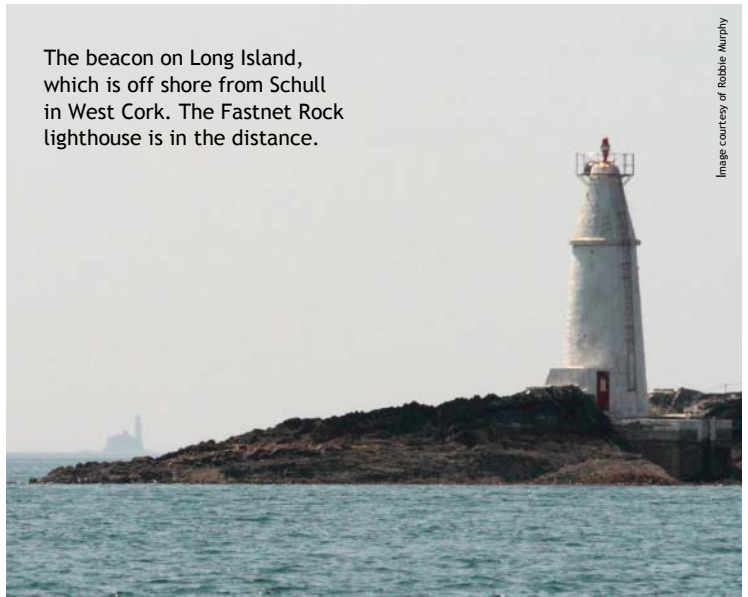


Image courtesy of Robbie Murphy

### Aids to Navigation

The Commissioners of Irish Lights are responsible for carrying out the Irish Government's obligations under the SOLAS Convention 1974 to provide marine aids to navigation (AtoN) in the Republic of Ireland and the UK government's SOLAS obligations to provide marine AtoN in Northern Ireland.



Image courtesy of Commissioners of Irish Lights

### Light Dues

"Light dues" is a fee that is collected from commercial vessels when they visit an Irish port. These fees are used to provide and maintain the aids to navigation around the Irish coastline. The fee charged is based on the weight of each vessel.



### ILV Granuaile



Image courtesy of Commissioners of Irish Lights

The Commissioners of Irish Lights have their own vessel. When ILV Granuaile was delivered in January 2000, it was one of the most advanced vessels of its type in the world at the time. It can operate in difficult sea conditions and is fitted with very precise positioning equipment linked to a satellite-based navigation system. The vessel's main function is to place and service 150 offshore buoys, which warn mariners of the location of sand banks, reefs and other offshore hazards near shipping routes. The vessel also serves as a helicopter platform for servicing offshore lighthouses and is available to assist State agencies with search and rescue, emergency towing, oil pollution control, surveying and offshore data collection.