

Aids to Navigation

Aids to Navigation help to keep seafarers safe at sea by making it easier for vessels to move around safely and efficiently. Aids to Navigation include lighthouses, buoys, beacons and lights, all of which have a fixed position on the earth's surface, which means they can be easily located on maps and electronic equipment. Seafarers can use them as guides around rocks, dangerous stretches of sea or to find safe harbours. Some Aids to Navigation are fixed stations on land, some are only accessible by boat or helicopter, while others are floating devices (such as buoys). Many of them have more than one purpose. The structure itself could be the guide, such as white beacon on a rock, but it may also be fitted with a signal light or other markings. Here are the locations of the Commissioners of Irish Lights' aids to navigation:



Lighthouses

The Commissioners of Irish Lights operate over 70 lighthouses around the coast of Ireland. All of these working lighthouses play a vital role in marine safety but are now automated and unmanned.



Buoys

Buoys are floating devices, which are anchored in position. They inform the seafarers of their surroundings, provide direction and warn of hazards. Equipment can also be added to buoys to provide data on such things as sea conditions.



Beacons

A beacon is a fixed manmade navigation mark that can be recognised by its shape, colour, pattern, topmark, or light character, or a combination of these. Irish Lights looks after 29 beacons around the coast.



Helipads

There are 8 helipads around the coast, which are maintained by Irish Lights. These are landing areas for helicopters when Irish Lights are accessing the lighthouses.



Great Lighthouses

Irish Lights are working in cooperation with local partners around the coast - north and south - to bring together 12 of Ireland's most spectacular working lighthouses, under a new brand called Great Lighthouses of Ireland.



MetOcean

There are currently seven buoys and two lighthouses, fitted with special sensors to collect environmental data. This meteorological and oceanographic data is fed back to headquarters and made available online.



Maps courtesy of Commissioners of Irish Lights