

Lighthouses

The Commissioners of Irish Lights look after all the lighthouses round the island of Ireland. Irish Lights can trace its history back to 1786. In 1914, in response to the sinking of RMS Titanic, the first international agreed sea treaty 'Safety of Life at Sea' (SOLAS) Convention was agreed. To fulfil their obligation as part of SOLAS, Irish Lights provides over 70 lighthouses, hundreds of buoys, beacons, electronic and radio Aids to Navigation which are used by general shipping and local users.

A lighthouse warns ships of dangerous places. They are also a navigational aid, positioned on trading routes, and close to ports and harbours. Today mariners use modern electronic and radio aids, together with lighthouses for maximum safety.

The shape of the tower was chosen by the designer. The 'day colour' is chosen to help the lighthouse stand out from their background. Lighthouses are painted differently to help mariners identify them during the day. The flash sequence of light from the lighthouse, helps mariners know where they are at night.

The Oldest Lighthouse

Wexford's Hook Lighthouse tower dates from the 12th century. It is the oldest operational lighthouse in the world.



Tallest Towers

The tallest onshore lighthouse on the island of Ireland is St John's Point, in Co Down. It is 40m tall. The tallest offshore lighthouse is Fastnet, off the SW coast of Co Cork. It is 54m tall.



Fastnet, off the SW coast of Co Cork ©marinas.com



St John's Point, Co Down ©marinas.com

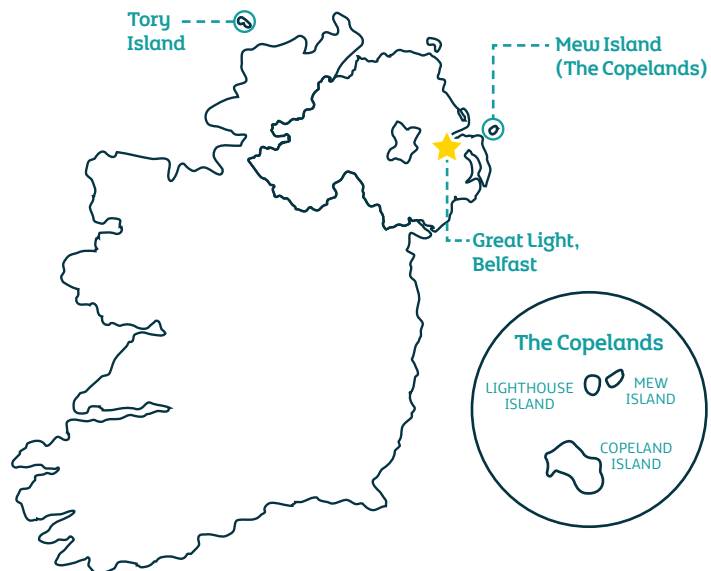
Great Lighthouses of Ireland

Visit www.greatlighthouses.com or www.irishlights.ie/tourism/our-lighthouses.aspx to discover more lighthouses around the coast.

The Great Light

The Great Light Served Two Lighthouses

1. Tory Island Lighthouse 1887-1925
2. Mew Island Lighthouse 1928-2014



Tory Island Lighthouse



In 1828, the Harbour Commissioners and the merchants of Sligo asked for a new lighthouse on Tory Island. Tory Island is a landfall lighthouse. It welcomed ships travelling from great distance across the Atlantic.

The lighthouse was designed by George Halpin and first lit on Wednesday, 1st August 1832. The tower is 27 metres tall. The light came from Argand lamps (a small oil lamp). As a landfall lighthouse it needed a very bright light. In 1887, the new Hyper-Radial optic (triform) was installed with light from three powerful gas burners, invented by John Richardson Wigham and the Great Light's story begins.

Mew Island Lighthouse



A lighthouse was originally built on Lesser Copeland Island in 1667 but was always considered to be in the wrong place. In the 1870s Belfast Harbour Commissioners asked for a lighthouse on Mew Island to guide ships to Belfast. The port was extremely busy, trading linen around the world, and had an expanding shipbuilding industry. The lighthouse was designed by William Douglass and first lit on Saturday 1st November 1884. The tower is 37 metres tall. At that time, the optic had three tiers (triform), with six First Order Fresnel lens panels per tier. The light was produced by Wigham's gas burners. This would change in the 1920s.