



## **Report of the 1<sup>st</sup> Session of the IALA Heritage Forum**

**18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

### **Background**

IALA established, as part of its work programme 2014-2018, a Heritage Forum where National Authorities in charge of Aids to Navigation can meet with other interested parties, such as heritage bodies, conservation trusts and so forth.

### **Introduction**

The first meeting was held at IALA Headquarters on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> November 2014, open to all IALA Members and people having an interest in lighthouses and lighthouse preservation. In order to retain as much participation from the former EEP Working Group 2 as possible, the Forum met for two days, during the same week as the new ENG Committee. Bob McIntosh of the Northern Lighthouse Board was in the chair.

There had been some uncertainty with regard to the attendance but the Forum attracted eighteen participants in total, half of them representing National Members. The other half consisted of an IALA Industrial Member, lighthouse associations, museums and other organisations having special interest in preservation.

### **Forum initiation discussions**

This very first meeting was starting on a blank page and some discussions were held with regard to the Forum role within the IALA Strategy and how it would articulate with the IALA Committees. The Forum being under the supervision of the ENG Committee there was some debate on the work covered by the ENG Committee Working Group 2 – Knowledge and sustainability, and potential overlaps with work items considered by the Forum. A fruitful co-operation is anticipated with this Working Group with regard to building maintenance and the use of modern technologies where they impact on historic lighthouses.

Extensive discussions took place when answering the question “What do we want from the Heritage Forum?” From the round of introductions at the start of the meeting and presentation of the various attendees’ interests and expectations it can be easily understood that answers to the question were of very different natures, and this variety proved to be a useful tool to achieve a clear picture of how the Panel could help in promoting dialogue and cooperation between those in charge of the technological aspects of lighthouses and those dedicated to preserving the historical nature of such buildings, to share mutual knowledge and experience.

As a result of the reorganisation of the ENG Committee and the Heritage Forum, it became clear during this first session of meetings that some of the work items previously considered under working group 2 of EEP Committee, particularly in relation to the use of modern technology in historic lighthouses, the continuing use of existing equipment particularly historic lenses and the encompassing topic of Building Maintenance in relation to historic lighthouses. There are real concerns that this may impact on the attendance of both the ENG Committee and Heritage Forum as several members would like to be involved with topics under both groups. As mentioned earlier, the

Forum members and Chairman in particular will ensure that participation and information is exchanged where practicable to assist in the input to the tasks.

## Work items

The fruitful discussions produced a revised version of the technical domains allocated to the Heritage Forum when the Committee structure was established for the work period 2014-2018. One had its topic changed from “Preservation of structures and artefacts” to “Preservation of structures and equipment” and an additional technical domain – Heritage awareness – was added; the work item lists were extended for all domains, giving the Forum detailed guidance for its work over the next three years.

As a result the Forum is intending to:

- Contribute to databases on lighthouses with additional materials, including repairs;
- Provide guidance on the preservation of historic lighthouse structures, including repairs to offshore lighthouses;
- Encourage continuing use of traditional lenses;
- Cooperate with the IALA ENG Committee in the preparation of guidance on installing modern equipment in historic lighthouses and on building maintenance;
- Provide guidance on the utilisation of redundant equipment
- Encourage IALA Members to take the importance of lighthouse heritage into account when carrying out projects on historic lighthouses, including:
  - Document history of changes in technology
  - Encourage access and use of archives
- Promote the world-wide aspects of lighthouse heritage by encouraging a network of information sources
- Encourage events under the UNESCO 2015 banner “Year of the Light”
- Update and produce IALA documentation as necessary.

At the end of the second and last meeting day the participants agreed that they should concentrate, in the near future, on solutions for traditional optics and technical equipment (such as fog signals), documentation of post-World War II technology, listing Websites of interest to lighthouse heritage, building a repair damage database and the UNESCO Year of Light.

There is still a great desire within the Heritage Forum to make use of the IALA Website to disseminate information on Lighthouse Heritage topics but there has been little further development of the Heritage web page since its initial installation several years ago and the means of developing this further is still unclear. It is anticipated that this could allow awareness of the Heritage Forum to be spread to a wider audience with access by the worldwide public audience.

## Heritage present situation and projects

The meeting was also an opportunity for the participants to talk about heritage in their countries. It is worth noting that a large majority reported on a concerning lack of co-operation between the Aids to Navigation authorities and the heritage bodies. This lack of cooperation is sometimes due to a distrust of the Aids to Navigation authorities who fear that drastic conditions would be imposed by the heritage bodies if the lighthouse is regarded as “historic”.

Presentations were made on a number of subjects, including: a management plan for historic lighthouses in Norway; a lighthouse virtual visits’ network through the Internet via the Website

[www.coastlight.net](http://www.coastlight.net); a virtual lighthouse museum on the Internet [www.pharecapspartel.com](http://www.pharecapspartel.com); damages and pathologies of coastal monuments; and, the restoration of an offshore lighthouse.

### **Advice to other IALA bodies**

The Forum had been requested to advise on a draft Model Course prepared by the IALA World Wide Academy, originally on lighthouse decommissioning. This was an interesting exercise, which stressed that people may easily mix up historic and decommissioned lighthouses. The Model Course was renamed “Historical Lighthouse Projects” and after a significant amount of discussion and debate the document was updated and it was agreed that it was now available for forwarding to IALA Council. The Forum will also consider how it can encourage National Members to take on the Model Course and develop teaching material to allow the course to be established in different regions of the world.

### **Next meeting**

The next meeting will be held at IALA Headquarters on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> May 2015. Lighthouse Societies are highly encouraged to participate in the Forum where all opinions are valued, and it is vital to find solutions for the future of historic lighthouses, which would be beneficial to all interested parties.