

Overview of the Northern Lighthouse Board

Mike Bullock*

マイク バロック*

* :Northern Lighthouse Board

* : 北部灯台局

1 Overview of the Northern Lighthouse Board

The Northern Lighthouse Board (NLB) has provided a vital safety service to mariners since 1786 and is responsible for the superintendence and management of all lights, buoys and beacons within Scottish and Isle of Man waters. The service makes a significant contribution to the prevention of accidents and incidents around the coastline, safeguarding not only lives and property, but also protecting our precious marine environment.

NLB currently operates and maintains 208 lighthouses and 174 buoys as well as providing radio aids to navigation (AtoN). The organisation is also responsible for ensuring other AtoN providers such as port authorities, are conforming to international standards. NLB's two ships PHAROS and POLE STAR carry out buoy work, deliver stores and supplies to lighthouses, inspect third party aids to navigation in Scottish waters, and are on standby to respond to wrecks and new navigational dangers.

Many of the lighthouses built in Scotland were engineered by the famous Stevenson family, who for over 150 years constructed wonders of engineering that have withstood the test of time and the elements, an amazing historical achievement.

2 Contributions, collaboration, and cooperation with the local community

Supporting local community initiatives is very important to NLB. We are keen to support initiatives that promote and drive tourism to Scotland's coastal communities and increase awareness of the role and history of NLB's unique heritage.

Our Retained Lightkeepers (RLKs) who are employed on a part-time basis and live locally to the lights, will often support these initiatives but it will depend on their availability. NLB Technicians and other staff will also help out. Some of the initiatives include:

- School visits to lighthouses
- Talks
- Filming
- Student photography projects
- Supporting projects through the Northern Lighthouse Heritage Trust (see the website for some of the projects the Heritage Trust has supported)

3 Aiming to utilize lighthouses as a local resource

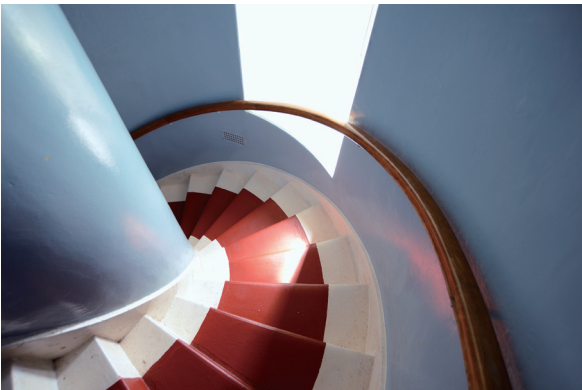
NLB is proud of its rich heritage and history and there are currently five lighthouses that are open to the public. The sites offer visitors a range of experiences



Photograph 1: Aerial view of the whole Mull



Photograph 3: Lightroom Mull of Galloway



Photograph 2: Mull of Galloway Stairs



Photograph 4: Mull of Galloway

from climbing the lighthouse and seeing how Lightkeepers lived to discovering the technology used in lighthouses today and finding out about the importance of Scotland's maritime and lighthouse heritage.

The visitor facilities at these lighthouses are run by Community Trusts who have an agreement with NLB to run tours. The five lighthouses currently open to the public are:

- Mull of Galloway Lighthouse
- Ardnamurchan Lighthouse
- Sumburgh Head Lighthouse
- North Ronaldsay Lighthouse
- Isle of May Lighthouse

NLB also has a very close relationship with the Museum of Scottish Lighthouses based in Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire. The Museum is a charity that tells the story of the Northern Lighthouse Board <https://lighthousemuseum.org.uk/>

3a Case Study – The Mull of Galloway Lighthouse

The Mull of Galloway Lighthouse is a functioning lighthouse that has kept mariners safe for almost 200 years. The Northern Lighthouse Board own and manage the lighthouse tower but thanks to the Mull of Galloway Trust, it has become a worldwide visitor attraction bringing a much needed boost to the local economy and raised the profile of the lighthouse and its history to a wide, international audience. Through its relationship with the Northern Lighthouse Board, the Mull of Galloway Trust has created a unique place that has brought our lighthouse heritage to life, using former lighthouse buildings to tell the story. It is a shining example of a successful community project and a model that could potentially be used by other organisations internationally.



Photograph 5: Signing of the Lighthouse Twinning

In addition, the twinning partnership with Japan's Inubosaki Lighthouse marks a significant milestone in lighthouse collaboration and paves the way for other nations with a "shared lighthouse heritage" to follow suit.

Community Buyout

On 4 July 2013, the former three lightkeepers cottages, the former engine room which is now an exhibition area, the RSPB centre, Foghorn and 30 acres of heathland at the Mull of Galloway was successfully bought by the community.

The Northern Lighthouse Board still own and operate the lighthouse but the Mull of Galloway Trust is responsible for the surrounding property and land.

The Lighthouse, known as a Stevenson Tower is a wonderful example of a Stevenson engineered lighthouse. It is situated in a stunning location where wildlife is abundant and is one of the best places in the UK to view dolphins, porpoises and many sea birds. In agreement with the Northern Lighthouse Board, the Mull of Galloway Trust gives tours of the lighthouse. The public can climb the 115 steps to the top of the Lighthouse, where they will be rewarded with a spectacular view from the balcony and lightroom. The old engine room houses an exhibition on the lighthouse and the engines

and foghorn are now fully operational following a refurbishment project. There are regular blasts and engine demonstrations throughout the year.

Tours of the engine room create a unique opportunity to experience working foghorn engines and air compressors and to get an insight into the lives of Lighthouse Keepers and the rich history associated with the Mull of Galloway Lighthouse. The Exhibition has achieved 4-Star visitor attraction status from Visit Scotland and attracts tour groups, independent travellers, local groups and schools. Visitors come for the whole Mull of Galloway experience: RSPB centre, café, lighthouse and coastal walks.

Holiday Cottages

The Trust also runs three former Lighthouse Keepers' cottages as holiday houses and these bring in a high rate of occupancy which in turn is beneficial for the local community and the economic development of Scotland. The Trust has ensured that the Mull of Galloway has become a major visitor attraction in the area, and this creates a valuable asset to the local economy.

Public Access and Education

As well as lighthouse tours and exhibition, the engine room exhibition and the lighthouse holiday cottages, the Mull has one of the last remaining sections of natural coastal habitat on the Galloway coast and as such supports a wide variety of plant and animal species. It is now a nature reserve managed by the RSPB. The Mull of Galloway Trail, one of Scotland's Great Trails, is a 59 km (37 mi) long-distance footpath that runs from the Mull of Galloway via Stranraer to Glen App near Ballantrae, where the trail

links with the Ayrshire Coastal Path.

The Mull of Galloway is recognised as a Site of Special Scientific interest (SSSI) and an area of national and local importance for the local community and holidaymakers and visitors to the area.

Employment

The Trust employs 10 local people at the Mull of Galloway and has put them through a World Host training course on customer care to ensure that they have the skills required to interact with visitors to the Mull.

Working in Partnership with the Local Community

By working in partnership with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the local Primary School, the Trust provides opportunities for pupils to visit the Mull on a regular basis. Whilst there, they undertake a variety of project – from building bug hotels, nature trails, learning the history of the Lighthouse and the families who lived there to checking out wildlife on the Reserve, marine life and wildflowers. They are out in the fresh air planting bulbs, walking and having fun. The Trust encourages the school to take part in a wide variety of events. For example, by providing workshops in the summer so they can learn to make art and crafts using items found on local beaches.

By listening to the local community, the Trust make decisions at the Mull which are of benefit to them but also to the growing number of visitors coming every year. The Trust works together with the community council, Information Centre, Harbour Trust and other organisations to ensure that this community makes the most of their assets. The Mull of Galloway is community owned with increasing visitors every year and any

profit is ploughed back into the local area. Job opportunities are advertised locally.

Everything done at the Mull of Galloway Lighthouse brings benefits to the local coastal economy by way of employment, increased spending in the local area in shops, guest houses, pubs and other attractions.

Twinning Agreement

In November 2025, the Northern Lighthouse Board and the Mull of Galloway Trust signed an agreement with the Japan Coast Guard to twin the Mull of Galloway Lighthouse with Inubosaki Lighthouse in Japan. It is the world's first-ever lighthouse twinning agreement.

The twinning partnership will highlight the shared heritage of Scotland and Japan and is an opportunity to exchange resources and ideas.

This is a very positive initiative for the Mull of Galloway Trust and for tourism in the local area. The initiative has already received coverage on the BBC news (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0lpygp41nzo>).

The following is a list of events held at the Mull of Galloway and shows the diverse range of activities taking place:

2014

- Three-day Festival at the Mull to thank the community for their support in carrying out a community buyout – the first in South Scotland

2015

- Mock Evacuation of Tower by local Fire Service – safety drill now adopted by NLB
- Scottish Government Ministerial visit presenting defibrillator to the Trust

2016

- Smugglers Festival

2017

- Hollywood film ‘The Vanishing’ starring Gerard Butler, Peter Mullen, Connor Swindells and Gary Lewis
- Baldy Bane theatre Group
- Community Arts & Crafts workshops for schools, local community and visitors
- Switch-on of restored foghorn engines
- Thomas Telford Celebration

2018

- Vintage car rally
- Foghorn restored and blasted publicly for first time at event at Easter
- Armistice Commemoration event
- Great British Railway Journeys – visit by Michael Portillo
- Scottish Rural Parliament delegate visit

2019

- The Walnuts band, with TV Presenter Matt Allwright, played at the Mull
- Presbytery visit by folk from Czech Republic
- BBC TV Springwatch filming
- Border Life –programme on history, community buyout etc

2020-2021

All events were cancelled due to the covid pandemic

2022

- Filming by BBC TV Landward programme
- Filming by Susan Calman for Secret Scotland series
- Recording and filming of Phil Cunningham’s new music

2023

- International Lighthouse Heritage Event
- Doors Open Day

2024

- D-Day celebrations
- Ferrari Photoshoot & Haymarket Media Photoshoot

- Painting competition for children + Easter Picnic
- New sundial commissioned and placed on site - exact copy of the original
- The Northern Lighthouse Board and the Mull of Galloway Trust signed an agreement with the Japan Coast Guard to twin the Mull of Galloway Lighthouse with Inubosaki Lighthouse in Japan. It is the world’s first-ever lighthouse twinning agreement. The twinning partnership will highlight the shared heritage of Scotland and Japan and is an opportunity to exchange resources and ideas.

2025

- HM Coastguard carried out a casualty rescue training exercise in the lighthouse tower.

4 Future prospects based on ties with Japan

We will continue to support the Mull of Galloway Trust with their link to Inubosaki Lighthouse.

Find out more

Northern Lighthouse Board

<https://www.nlb.org.uk/>

Mull of Galloway Trust

<https://www.mull-of-galloway.co.uk/albums/mull-of-galloway-experience/>



Photograph 6 : Coastguard training exercise at Mull of Galloway