On 6 October the Irish Post Office, An Post, reported that it has issued four new stamps honouring the Commissioners of Irish Lights. The new 72c stamps, a special first day cover envelope and booklet feature Irish Lights staff working on a buoy; a helicopter near Fanad Head Lighthouse; Irish Lights technology and the Irish Lights Vessel Granuaile. Designed by Dublin’s Vermillion Design, the may be viewed and purchased at all main post offices and online at www.irishstamps.ie

As well as maintaining more than 60 lighthouses around the island of Ireland, Irish Lights also provides and maintains specialist aids to navigation using advanced technology, protects the environment and supports the marine industry and coastal communities.

The Commissioners of Irish Lights is vested under Section 634 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894 with the responsibility for superintendence and management of all lighthouses and other aids to navigation for Ireland (North and South) and the adjacent seas and islands. There are no boundaries at sea and Irish Lights works closely with the UK General Lighthouse Authorities to provide a consistent and integrated service to mariners.

Welcoming the stamps, Irish Lights Chief Executive, Yvonne Shields said: ‘Irish Lights is delighted that these stamps reflect the innovative, modern-day navigation and maritime services that we provide around the island of Ireland, 365 days of the year. Our staff work closely with local authorities, communities and marine industries around the coast ensuring a vital safety service. The collection also showcases our new tourism initiative – Great Lighthouses of Ireland – which gives visitors the unique opportunity to stay-in or visit a lighthouse.’

Lighthouses have always been held in affection by local communities and have helped seafarers find their way to safety for centuries. Hook Head Lighthouse, Co. Wexford is one of the oldest operational lighthouses in the world. Fifth century monks of Rinn Dubhán lit a beacon at Hook Head to guide shipping and were subsequently enrolled as ‘lighthouse keepers’, tending the tower until 1641.

The Great Lighthouses of Ireland tourism initiative enables visitors to learn more about 12 lighthouses in breath-taking coastal locations – including Clare Island, Co Mayo; St John’s Point, Co Down and Ballycotton, Co Cork – their modern-day technology, natural surroundings and the people who are so passionate about these unique buildings.