



IALA GUIDELINE

G1093

THE MANAGEMENT OF TRANSFER OF SURPLUS LIGHTHOUSE PROPERTY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past centuries, technological developments have transformed how Marine Aids to Navigation (AtoN) services are delivered. Lighthouses, which were traditionally staffed and comprised multiple buildings for operational and residential purposes, have increasingly become unmanned and automated due to advancements in equipment and control systems. As a result, many lighthouse properties now contain structures that are no longer essential to core operational functions. These are referred to as surplus lighthouse properties.

In recent years, AtoN authorities worldwide have reassessed the need for traditional infrastructure. In many cases, this has led to the downsizing of service areas, the implementation of electronic AtoN, and the complete decommissioning of traditional systems. At the same time, budget constraints and rising maintenance costs have further encouraged consideration of alternative solutions. While complementary uses such as cultural or community purposes may be explored under other IALA guidance (e.g. G1063 and G1075), this guideline focuses on situations where such alternatives are not viable, and a transfer of ownership is required.

While it is preferential from a heritage perspective for surplus lighthouse property to be retained by the AtoN managing authorities (and given complementary use if possible, see G1063), it is recognised that this is not always feasible. In such cases, it is important that any transfer of ownership is carried out responsibly, with consideration for cultural value, community interest, and operational continuity.

International policy frameworks reflect these broader concerns. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 11.4 calls for strengthened efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage. UNESCO and ICOMOS promote integrated and participatory models for maritime heritage management, while the European Union supports the adaptive reuse of historic public assets through its cultural heritage strategies.

This guideline offers practical and balanced recommendations to support the responsible transfer of ownership of surplus lighthouse property. It encourages decision-making that considers operational, financial, cultural, environmental, and community factors, while allowing flexibility for adaptation to the diverse legal and institutional contexts of IALA Member States.

2. SCOPE

The purpose of this guideline is to support competent authorities in making informed, transparent, and context-sensitive decisions regarding the future of surplus lighthouse property. It promotes the development of long-term strategies that consider the responsible transfer of ownership.

In the context of this guideline, transfer of ownership refers to the sale or donation of surplus lighthouse property to third parties.

3. CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROPERTY TRANSFER

When surplus lighthouse properties are transferred to another entity, it is essential that the process preserves public value, ensures the protection of cultural and environmental assets, and secures access for any remaining AtoN functions. Legal procedures, responsibilities, and requirements for the transfer of public property vary between countries; however, the following general considerations are recommended to support responsible and sustainable outcomes.

3.1. CHOOSING APPROPRIATE PROSPECTIVE OWNERS

When selecting prospective owners for surplus lighthouse properties, the following points are recommended for consideration:

- Favour prospective owners who demonstrate the capability to preserve and conserve the site's cultural, architectural, or historical elements, and who show an interest in maintaining public access.
- Prioritise entities such as local authorities, NGOs, specialised bodies, or private organisations with a public-interest or heritage conservation mandate.
- Encourage community involvement in the planning and management of the site after the transfer.
- Avoid transfer agreements that restrict long-term public benefit or result in excessive privatisation.
- Incorporate legal safeguards such as conservation clauses, easements, or reversion rights to ensure protection in the event of misuse or neglect.

3.2. CONTINUITY OF ATO N OPERATIONS

Where only part of a lighthouse site is to be transferred, and AtoN operational management is to be retained by the existing AtoN authority, the following points are recommended for consideration:

- Favour transfer agreements that allow access to, and operational control over, any equipment or land required for AtoN services.
- Establish right-of-access clauses within transfer or lease agreements to safeguard future AtoN requirements.
- Implement shared land-use agreements that clearly define maintenance responsibilities between parties.
- Consider potential future reactivation or backup AtoN use when determining site boundaries or rights.

3.3. HERITAGE PROTECTION MEASURES

When transferring surplus lighthouse property to another entity, the following considerations are recommended to ensure the protection of the site's heritage value:

- Ensure prospective owners are made aware of the site's cultural and historical significance, as well as their associated responsibilities.
- Encourage the inclusion of heritage value statements within the transfer documentation.
- Seek to provide the new owner with supporting materials such as historical records, photographs, or conservation management plans.
- Use legal instruments such as heritage zoning, statutory registration, or conservation easements to formalise obligations.

3.4. ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY AND REMEDIATION

It is recommended that environmental safeguards be considered when transferring surplus lighthouse property:

- Conduct pre-transfer environmental risk assessments to identify potential hazards (e.g. asbestos, fuel tanks, mercury, or lead-based paint).
- Where feasible, implement site remediation or mitigation plans to address identified risks.

3.5. LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL INSTRUMENTS

The following considerations support the transfer of surplus lighthouse property in a way that it aligns with long-term public value, complies with international norms, and promotes sustainable outcomes:

- Include enforceable conditions in transfer agreements, such as reversion rights, periodic review clauses, or penalties for non-compliance.
- Clearly assign long-term institutional responsibility to a competent and accountable organisation.
- Ensure that the transfer is consistent with applicable national legislation, sectoral regulations, and cultural policy frameworks.

3.6. ACCOMPANYING ARTEFACTS AND EQUIPMENT

Artefacts and equipment located within AtoN sites often contribute to the historical significance and interpretation of the site. When transferring surplus lighthouse property that includes such items, the following considerations are recommended:

- Favour agreements in which artefacts and equipment are retained on site as interpretive or educational resources and are appropriately maintained.
- Where on-site retention is not possible, prefer agreements in which items are transferred by the new owner to an appropriate institution (e.g. museum or exhibition venue)
- Avoid agreements that result in the abandonment, scrapping, or disposal of historically significant artefacts.

4. CONCLUSION

Where AtoN authorities are required to transfer ownership of all or part of an AtoN site, this Guideline provides a set of recommendations to support the planning and execution of transfer agreements. It is important that AtoN authorities recognise the potential implications of their decisions on the heritage value of lighthouse buildings and any associated equipment.

If a Competent Authority is considering the complementary use of surplus lighthouse property, including lease or leaseback arrangements, reference should be made to IALA Guideline G1075 and the IALA Complementary Lighthouse Use Manual.

5. ABBREVIATIONS

NGO	Non-governmental organization
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites

6. REFERENCES

- [1] United Nations. (2015) Sustainable Development Goal 11.4: Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage. In: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- [2] UNESCO. (2021) Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention.
- [3] UNESCO. (2011) Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape.
- [4] ICOMOS. (2019) Guidance on Heritage at Risk and Coastal Heritage Adaption.
- [5] IALA. R1005 Conserving the Built Heritage of Lighthouses and Other Aids to Navigation
- [6] IALA. G1063 Agreements for Complementary use of Lighthouses
- [7] IALA. G1075 Business Plan for the complementary use of a Historic Lighthouse



[8] IALA. IALA Complementary Lighthouse Use Manual