

Harland and Wolff's Belfast yard completes first barge destined for River Thames

The first barge to be fabricated at Harland and Wolff's Belfast shipyard as part of a major contract with Cory Group has passed muster.

The London-based barge operator signed off on the hull of vessel which is one of 23 which will roll off the production line at the iconic shipyard.

Signed across two deals last summer with Riverside Energy Park Limited, part of the Cory Group, the barges will be used to transport recyclable and non-recyclable waste along the River Thames.

The remaining barges are expected to roll off the production line in the coming months as activity returns in force to the yard following its takeover by Infrastrata.

"It is fantastic to walk round the fabrication halls in Belfast and see them being a hive of activity, with our apprentices putting into practice the skills they have learned from our experienced workforce," John Wood, Group Chief Executive Officer, Harland & Wolff, said. "It has been fascinating to watch the adoption of new technology with our twin headed robotic welding line delivering production improvements by a magnitude of four to six times against conventional production and welding methods."

The barge contract has allowed the company to ramp up the workforce in Belfast ahead of the start of the £1.6 billion Fleet Solid Support warship programme. Harland and Wolff is one of companies which is part of the consortium delivering the Royal Navy contract to deliver three ships. Its share of

the deal is worth £700 million to £800 million throughout the life of the programme which will commence later this year and last for seven years.

“I am very encouraged with the progress being made and it is the perfect stepping stone towards full scale shipbuilding,” John Wood said.