

Harland & Wolff's Belfast shipyard wins first UK cruise ship contract in 20 years

Harland and Wolff has won the UK's first cruise ship contract in 20 years.

The Belfast shipyard will undertake works on P&O's Aurora and Cunard's Queen Victoria in its dry docks for 33 days.

The Queen Victoria will be in the city in May while Aurora will undergo works in June.

Cunard's Queen Victoria will be the largest cruise ship ever to have dry docked in a UK yard when it arrives here in May.

The legendary shipyard, famed for building the Titanic, fell into administration a few years ago and so winning such impressive contracts is a huge achievement.

Harland and Wolff was bought in 2019 by Infrastrata for £6 million.

The group chief executive, John Wood, explained: "When acquiring the assets of Harland and Wolff in December 2019 and in a pre-pandemic period, the cruise industry was one of our key target markets.

"Our facilities are ideally placed to capitalise on these types of large projects while we continue servicing our smaller but regular clients.

"We have now secured contracts in four out of our five markets; commercial, cruise and ferry, renewables and energy – we now look forward to completing the final milestone of securing a defence contract in the near future."

Harland and Wolff was founded in 1861 and between 1909 and 1914 the company built the Titanic as well as Britannic and Olympic.

This new contract meant Harland and Wolff returning to cruise ship building for the first time in more than 20 years.

Carnival UK, vice-president maritime David Varty said: "We are delighted to be able to have these two ships at a UK shipyard with such a long heritage and reputation and we very much look forward to supporting the UK maritime industry and working closely with the Harland & Wolff team on this project."

The contract comes as part of an ambitious 'reactivation' strategy for the future which it hopes will maximise opportunities from plans to build over 150 UK domestic vessels in the coming years.

The works due to be undertaken to both ships are standard drydocking operations that will give Harland & Wolff the opportunity to demonstrate to the wider cruise industry its skills, capabilities and expertise in these types of projects.