

Shipbuilding returns to Belfast with £1.6 billion Harland & Wolff deal

Ship building will return to Belfast with news that a consortium led by Harland & Wolff has won a £1.6 billion contract with the Royal Navy.

The deal is expected to create 1,200 jobs across the three companies in the consortium, 900 of which will be based in Belfast, and a further 800 across the UK supply chain.

The Ministry of Defence named Team Resolute – made up of Harland & Wolff, Bath-based design company BMT and the UK arm of Spanish shipbuilder Navantia – as its preferred bidder for the construction of three support ships for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

The 216 metre-long ships provide munitions, stores and provisions to aircraft carriers, destroyers and frigates at sea and all final assembly will be completed at Harland & Wolff's Belfast shipyard. Other components will be manufactured at the company's Appledore yard in Devon and in its Scottish yards in Methil and Arnish, as well as at Navantia's shipyard in Cadiz in Spain.

The deal marks a remarkable turnaround for Harland & Wolff's Belfast yard which was at risk of closure when it entered administration in 2019 before being bought by Infrastrata. Since then it has won a number of contracts for ship refit and barge building but the latest deal will be regarded as a landmark given the vessels will be the first ships to be built in the yard in nearly 20 years.

Group CEO of Harland & Wolff John Wood welcomed the deal.

“Team Resolute is proud to have been selected as preferred bidder to provide the Royal Fleet Auxiliary with three state-of-the-art, adaptable ships which will fulfil the Royal Navy’s needs while strengthening UK sovereign design and shipbuilding capability, as well as generating around £1.4 billion in national social and economic value,” he said. “Team Resolute will be making a significant investment into the UK and help to level up UK Government defence spend across the whole Union. We will create high quality UK jobs, apprenticeships and four facilities across the UK which will have shipbuilding capabilities fit for the 21st century.”

UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said the news is a boost to UK shipbuilding.

“By selecting Team Resolute, the Ministry of Defence has secured £77 million of investment into UK shipyards, creating around 2,000 UK jobs, and showcasing cutting-edge British design,” he said. “Building on ambitions laid out in the National Shipbuilding Strategy, we are also bolstering technology transfer and key skills from a world-renowned shipbuilder, crucial in the modernisation of British shipyards.”