



## **Gary Barlow to perform as P&O Cruises names new ship Iona**

April 28, 2021

P&O Cruises new ship Iona will be officially named in a contemporary ceremony featuring a special one-off performance from Gary Barlow broadcast to a virtual audience.

Dame Irene Hays, DBE, DL, owner and chair of Hays Travel Group, will be godmother to the ship, Britain's largest and most environmentally-friendly, in the landmark ceremony in Southampton on May 16, 2021.

Gary Barlow will perform a short set as part of the event, which will be broadcast to a VIP audience, in his role as music director. His involvement includes overseeing the ship's 710 Club music venue and curating new talent to perform on board.

Dame Irene's husband John, who died last November, founded Hays Travel in 1980 and it has grown to become the UK's largest independent travel agency group. Together they were instrumental in the expansion of the Sunderland-based company and particularly in the acquisition of Bath Travel in 2013 and Thomas Cook's retail travel agencies in 2019.

P&O Cruises president Paul Ludlow said "We are absolutely delighted that Dame Irene Hays will be Iona's godmother, taking centre stage alongside Gary Barlow in a landmark naming ceremony which will be the first stepping stone on the path to the return of the UK cruise industry.

"Since the inception of Hays Travel there is no one who has been more supportive of cruising or more of an ambassador for the travel industry. As such there is no one more appropriate to name Iona in this prestigious event than Dame Irene as we celebrate her achievements.

"The travel industry as a whole has been paused for over a year and has been devastated by the events of the last 13 months. We are so immensely grateful for the support we have received from travel agents across the UK, all of whom have faced commercial challenges none of us could have imagined.

"With domestic cruising opening up from May 17 and with our series of UK coastal cruises proving very popular this summer, recovery is certainly on the horizon and Iona's arrival into the UK and naming ceremony will be the ray of hope the cruise sector has needed for such a long time.

"We also feel honoured that we are able to support the Hays Travel Charitable Foundation which encourages young people to be the very best they can be across education, sport and the arts. Being able to play a small part in securing the future of the next generation is indeed a privilege."

Iona is Britain's most environmentally-friendly and largest cruise ship and will sail her seven night maiden voyage around the coast of the island of Iona and the Scottish Isles from Southampton on Saturday August 7, 2021. To book go to [www.pocruises.com](http://www.pocruises.com) or telephone 03453 555 111 or call a trusted travel agent.

### **Note to Editors**

Irene Hays was awarded a CBE in 2008 and she was made a Dame in the 2021 New Year's Honours for her services to training, education and young people, which she said was recognition of the commitment John and the training team at Hays had made to developing young people. Prior to the Thomas Cook acquisition, over 40% of Hays Travel managers had started out as apprentices.

She has also been a powerful advocate of Hays Travel community and charitable activities – where Hays Travel colleagues contribute to their local communities. Hays Travel now funds a community partnership in every branch across the country and five years ago John and Irene created the Hays Travel Charitable Foundation which has so far donated over £1.5 million to support young people to be the best they can be in education, sport, the arts and their health.

Brought up in Ashington, Northumberland., Dame Irene worked her way through the ranks in local and national government, becoming CEO of two UK metropolitan authorities (Sunderland City Council and South Tyneside Council) and Director General of Local Government and Regeneration in Whitehall.

Dame Irene has served on a number of boards and governing bodies, including the boards of Sport England, The Football Foundation and the Academy for Sustainable Communities. She is currently a non-executive director on the Board of the Department of Education and chairs its Education and Skills Funding Agency.

She holds an honorary Doctorate from the University of Sunderland and Lifetime Achievement Award for supporting the growth of businesses in the North East of England.

### **Vaccine policy**

Given the advanced progress of the UK vaccination programme and strong expressed preference on the part of our guests, these sailings on Britannia and Iona will be for UK resident, Covid-19 vaccinated guests only.

All other P&O Cruises holidays currently on sale do not require guests to be vaccinated.

For details please visit - <https://www.pocruises.com/cruise-with-confidence>

### **Travel insurance**

As part of our health and wellbeing protocols it is mandatory for all UK guests to have suitable travel insurance cover in order to cruise with us. Use booking code - PAOHX.

To find out more visit - <https://www.holidayextras.com/pocruises/insurance.html>

### **Enhanced protocols**

All guests and crew will be required to follow enhanced health and wellbeing measures to protect everyone on board. These have been developed with guidance from our global medical and public health experts and scientists, and in close coordination with UK Government agencies. Further details - <https://www.pocruises.com/cruise-with-confidence>

### **About P&O Cruises**

P&O Cruises is Britain's favourite cruise line, welcoming guests to experience holidays with a blend of discovery, choice, relaxation and exceptional service catered towards British tastes. P&O Cruises fleet of premium ships combine genuine service, a sense of occasion and attention to detail. In 2021, P&O Cruises will launch Iona its first Excel class ship. The new LNG-powered ship, with 5,200-guest capacity, will be the largest ship built to serve the UK market. Iona will feature enhancements to already successful brand signature venues from the existing fleet, as well as features newly developed for Iona.

P&O Cruises second LNG-powered Excel class ship and sister ship to Iona is named Arvia, meaning from the seashore, and will join the fleet in December 2022. Arvia is an innovative and future-focused ship and will offer outstanding, varied and contemporary holidays. Arvia has been designed to travel to the sun all year-round and to maximise views of the ocean and the seashore from everywhere on board.

With over 200 destinations worldwide, P&O Cruises itineraries are carefully curated to inspire discovery, and are varied to suit newcomers and experienced guests alike. With a wide choice of holidays from two days to three months there is something for everyone. P&O Cruises sails to Australia & New Zealand, Baltic, the British Isles, Canada, the Spain, Portugal & the Canary Islands, the Caribbean, Central America, the Far East & Asia, the Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean, Scandinavia, South America, the South Pacific, the United States and Western Europe.

The company is part of Carnival Corporation & plc (NYSE/LSE: CCL; NYSE:CUK).

### **Image links:**

Godmother – <https://www.pocruisespresspictures.com/p/ourfleet/C385153532/iona-godmother>

Gary Barlow - <https://www.pocruisespresspictures.com/p/people/C362703604/gary-barlow>

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