

VIDEO – Wojtek the Bear is back in town



Look out for the Wojtek the Bear bus which was unveiled this afternoon by the Lord Provost the Rt Hon Donald Wilson and which is currently on the number 26 bus route today.

The Wojtek story is a fascinating one, as he really was a part of the Polish Army. Rescued when only a cub in 1942 in Persia he was brought up by members of Polish II Corps and then fought alongside Allied Forces in the Italian campaign, notably at the Battle of Monte Cassino. Unbelievable as this tale sounds, it is true and there is now a trust set up to raise funds for the statue in his honour planned for Princes Street Gardens. Wojtek ended his days in Edinburgh Zoo in 1963.

[The Edinburgh Reporter NEWS – Wojtek the Bear](#) from [Phyllis Stephen](#) on [Vimeo](#).

The statue will cost around £300,000 and already over £200,000 of that sum has been raised. Today on Armistice Day and Polish Independence Day the bus was unveiled in Festival Square. Lothian Bus number 889 has been donated for 12 months by Lothian Buses and will run on a variety of routes across the city.

Planning permission has already been [granted](#) by the council for the statue to be put up in the area of Princes Street near the Ross Bandstand.



Jacob from South Queensferry is off home to read the

book!

Lothian Buses said that part of the reason for their sponsorship is that they have an international work force. Over the last 10 years Lothian Buses have had a steady recruitment of Polish people coming to Edinburgh to start new lives with their families.

The company currently employs around 100 Polish employees, some who have been working there for a decade, including Lukasz Bieda, who was driving the Wojtek bus today. Lukasz is also the originator and project manager of the Wojtek bus project.

Ann Faulds, Chair Lothian Buses, said:

“We are delighted to be supporting the Wojtek Memorial Trust. The story of Wojtek the Bear is close the hearts of many of our Polish employees and the wider Polish Edinburgh community. The bus looks fantastic, is sure to be very popular with our passengers and I’m confident that it will play a big part in further raising the profile of the ongoing fundraising drive.”

Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs Fiona Hyslop added:

“Wojtek the Soldier Bear symbolises the strong relationship between Scotland and Poland and our historic links. The Scottish Government recognises the huge contribution Polish immigrants make to Scottish life – from the Poles who fought alongside us, and alongside Wojtek, in World War Two, to more recent arrivals.

“I want young Scots, including those from Polish families, to know the story of Wojtek the Soldier Bear, and I’m delighted that this bus will bring the story alive to many people across Edinburgh.”

