

# Transport & Environment Committee

4 June 2013

## Wojtek “the Soldier Bear” Commemorative Statue for West Princes Street Gardens

Item number	7.1
Report number	
Wards	City Centre

### Links

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Coalition pledges	P31
Council outcomes	CO19, CO20
Single Outcome Agreement	

### Mark Turley

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# Executive summary

## Wojtek “the Soldier Bear” Commemorative Statue for West Princes Street Gardens

### Summary

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The Wojtek Memorial Trust is seeking Council support to erect a commemorative bronze statue to Wojtek “the Soldier Bear” in their favoured location of West Princes Street Gardens.

### Recommendations

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- a. That Committee support the proposal to erect a Wojtek” the Soldier Bear” statue in West Princes Gardens, at the location described in this report.
- b. That Committee accept responsibility for the on-going care and maintenance of the statue, as determined in a maintenance agreement with the Wojtek Memorial Trust.
- c. That Committee refers this report to the Culture & Sport Committee meeting of 20 August 2013.

### Measures of success

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Statue erected in Princes Street Gardens.

### Financial impact

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The costs of construction and erection will be met by the Wojtek Memorial Trust. A celebration of the Wojtek Memorial Trust will be held at the invitation of Major General Nick Eeles, General Officer Commanding Scotland and Governor of Edinburgh Castle, in the Great Hall of Edinburgh Castle on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2013 as a preliminary to a public fundraising appeal for £250,000. Further events will be held in the year to encourage donations and to give time for requests to selected grant aided bodies to be made.

Feedback from the Culture and Sport Service has identified that currently there is no budget for the maintenance of new additions to the statues and monuments collection.

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For this reason Culture and Sport will be seeking a “one off” endowment contribution from the Trust, details of which would be agreed if this proposal is approved. The average cost for the maintenance of a monument is in the region of £1000 per annum.

## Equalities impact

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This matter will be considered at any subsequent planning application stage.

However, recent Scottish Government research identified a lack of awareness of historical connections between Scotland and Poland, siting the bear in Princes Street Gardens could go some way to fostering good relations (one of the three Public Sector Equality Duties).

## Sustainability impact

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There are no sustainability impacts arising from this proposal.

## Consultation and engagement

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Edinburgh World Heritage (EWH) has been asked for opinion on the proposal. It advises that from the point of view of the World Heritage Site's outstanding universal value, the proposals will have minimal impact, and that the value of the statue lies in its ability to encourage the exploration of the World Heritage Site. To this end EWS suggested to the group that Hillside Crescent would be an ideal location, where the proposals could have a positive effect and would be welcomed by the community. However, in principle, EWS appear to have no objections to the statue being sited in Princes Street Gardens.

Ultimately the balance needs to be struck between the significance of the universal themes of war and resettlement that the proposal represents and the significance of the location.

Discussions with Planning suggest that they would welcome a planning application should the Council be minded to support the proposal.

## Background reading / external references

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Further information of Wojtek the Soldier Bear and the proposed statue can be found at [www.wojtekthebear.com](http://www.wojtekthebear.com)

## Wojtek “the Soldier Bear” Commemorative Statue for West Princes Street Gardens

### 1. Background

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- 1.1 For a number of years the Wojtek Memorial Trust has sought to erect a commemorative statue to Wojtek “the Soldier Bear” in Edinburgh. West Princes Street Gardens is now their favoured location following consideration of locations in Edinburgh Zoo, Edinburgh Castle, Calton Hill, Hillside Crescent and the precinct in front of St. Mary’s Metropolitan Cathedral, all of which were considered inappropriate by the Trust or landowner.
- 1.2 First rescued by Polish troops as an orphan bear cub in Persia, Wojtek travelled through the Middle East and into Europe, where at the Battle of Monte Cassino in 1944 he engaged with the allied troops in battle carrying heavy munitions for the front line. After the war he was evacuated as a displaced bear with the soldiers into Scotland and after a parade in the streets of Glasgow he was then housed in the resettlement camp at Sunwick Farm in Berwickshire. The majority of the soldiers could not return to what had become Stalin’s Poland and West Ukraine and the bear eventually went into the protection of Edinburgh Zoo where he lived until his death in 1963.

### 2. Main report

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- 2.1 The Wojtek Memorial Trust is seeking Council support to erect a commemorative bronze statue to Wojtek “the Soldier Bear” in their favoured location of West Princes Street Gardens.
- 2.2 The statue will be created by the sculptor, Alan Beattie Herriot and its setting will be designed and managed by Morris Steedman and Partners. The subject of the statue symbolises the strength of friendship and support between Scotland and Poland in times of war and in subsequent peace. It will be a figurative piece depicting the Polish soldier and the bear standing together in relaxed repose when meeting people. A low relief panel to the rear of the sculpture will illustrate the remarkable life of Wojtek. Wide stone steps will provide a seating point from which to view the gardens. Additional planting behind the panel will frame the setting. The choice of materials for the setting will be made in consultation with the council.

- 2.3 The chosen site is located at the south side of the top terrace walk at the west end of West Princes Street Gardens. It is at the corner of a pathway leading down into the main area of the gardens. The space currently is grassed and bounded by a low level railing. The composition will be visible from Princes Street and it will be possible to interact with the statue from the walkway. The aspect to the castle is considered reminiscent of the aspect the soldiers would have faced at the final Battle of Monte Cassino in May 1944 as they fought their way up the mountainous slopes assisted by Wojtek.
- 2.4 Future memorials are planned in Warsaw, Poland and Monte Cassino, Italy to bring together the three countries of Scotland, Poland and Italy in the name of Wojtek. Alongside these endeavours the trustees wish to promote education and instruction and international cultural links utilising Wojtek “The Soldier Bear” as an inspiration for learning the lessons of history through art and sculpture; studying the relationship between man and animal; and understanding the psychology of combat stress.
- 2.5 The scheduled date for the unveiling of the statue is planned for 18 May 2014, which will be the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the final Battle of Monte Cassino and the raising of the Polish flag.

### 3. Recommendations

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- a. That Committee support the proposal to erect a Wojtek” the Soldier Bear” statue in West Princes Gardens, at the location described in this report.
- b. That Committee accept responsibility for the on-going care and maintenance of the statue, as determined in a maintenance agreement with the Wojtek Memorial Trust.
- c. That Committee refers this report to the Culture & Sport Committee meeting of 20 August 2013.

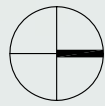
**Mark Turley**

Director of Services for Communities

## Links

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<b>Coalition pledges</b>	P31
<b>Council outcomes</b>	CO19, CO20
<b>Single Outcome Agreement</b>	
<b>Appendices</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Location Plan of the statue in West Princes Street Gardens.</li><li>2. Site Plan of the statue in West Princes Street Gardens.</li><li>3. Photographic Montage.</li></ol>



Revision Description:



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Client : The Wojtek Memorial Trust

Project : Wojtek the Bear Commemorative Statue  
Edinburgh

Title : Princes Street Gardens West  
Location Plan

Scale 1:500

Drawn CA

Date 19.02.13

Status Proposal

Job no. 0426

Drawing no.

Rev.



Revision Description:





