

# 105 Swindon Lions Special!

March 2024

# SC SENTINEL



## SWINDON LIONS HELP UKRAINIAN CHILDREN

**This fine group of Swindon Lions may look rather cramped but that's because the space was not designed for them. Rather they are guests of the Swindon Humanitarian Aid Partnership (SHAP) as they unveiled The Children's Story Bus which will be driven to Ukraine to bring some fun and colour to children of that country.**

**SHAP was founded shortly after the Russian invasion and has, so far, delivered 1,800 tonnes of much needed aid to Ukraine as well as supporting the growing number of Ukrainian refugees in the Swindon area. The charity has been remarkably successful in gathering and sending to Ukraine contributions from many companies and individuals; including hundreds of hospital beds and mattresses, pallets of hygiene products and thousands of boxes of toys, candles and medical aid.**



**The founding chairman of SHAP, Mike Bowden (seen above at the front), who was not then a Lion but is now a proud and valued member of the Swindon Club, has developed a partnership with the Go-Ahead Group who have, to date, donated seven buses for use in Ukraine. The first of these was converted into a mobile hospital/clinic and is still doing sterling service close to the front line of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine.**



**The bus much as it would be recognised by commuters in Essex.**

**The Children's Story Bus was actually donated by Go-East Anglia whose Head of Commercial and Marketing, Davina Langley takes up the story:-**

**"The Go-Ahead Group was approached by SHAP's Chairman Lion Mike Bowden earlier this year, to provide a bus they could convert into a Children's Story Bus. Go East Anglia, who provide local bus and school services across Norfolk, Essex and Suffolk, were delighted to get involved and we were able to provide a single decker bus, which although mechanically sound, had reached the end of its life in regular service, from East Anglia to Swindon to begin its transformation."**

**Once delivered to SHAP the seats were removed, any damage repaired and the whole inside painted as an enchanted forest by a local artist, Billy Beaumont.**

**Billy also included Ukrainian figures in national costume and the Ukrainian alphabet. He was greatly assisted in this with input from Ukrainian refugee children. He said: 'I have followed the work of SHAP for many months and like them I am always keen to give something back to the those needing some kindness and support. I couldn't resist the opportunity to create a colourful and thought-provoking play area for the children of Ukraine. I've incorporated iconic images from Britain and Ukraine into the mural - how many will people recognise? I've met many of the locally based Ukrainians and**



**am amazed at their resilience and determination to find work and play a full part in Swindon's community. I hope the bus spends many months touring Ukraine, helping to inspire the healthy imagination of children, a safe and colourful space to create and learn."**

**insurance for the UK and in the next few weeks, the bus will be driven by him to Calais where it will be handed over to Ukrainian drivers who will return home with it.**

**Go-East not only provided the bus but also the volunteer driver with the appropriate**

**Lion Mike said: "Children in Ukraine have witnessed and experienced things that are unimaginable and while we cannot conceivably remove their trauma, we can allow them to enjoy the colour and fun of this bus. Just maybe, we hope, it will allow them to play and laugh as children should be able to do. We are indebted to Swindon Lions for their wonderfully generous donation which has helped fund the conversion of the bus and pay for its journey to Ukraine "**



**Initially Swindon Lions became involved by organising fund raising collections outside local supermarkets in 2022 for refugees in the area, then after a moving and emotional talk from Lion Mike at one of the Club's meetings, by helping SHAP with manpower and a substantial financial donation.**

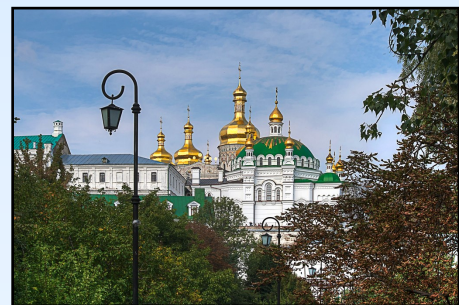
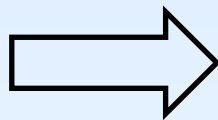


On the Children's Story bus Swindon Lions Secretary Lion Steve Austin and Past President Lion Helen Marson.

**Swindon Lions Vice-President Pete Kennewell said:  
"Being a Lion is all about service and community.  
We are proud and delighted to contribute to a small  
local organisation that tries so hard to make a real  
difference to the lives of people in wartorn Ukraine."**



**From Swindon...**



**...to Ukraine**

