

Deal struck to save London red bus maker: owner

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Who could imagine London without them

A deal has been brokered to save the manufacturers of London's iconic red double decker buses from liquidation, the firm's owner said Friday.

"Following intensive overnight negotiations between the two parties

agreement has been reached in principle over the sale of Wrightbus to Ryse Hydrogen," Jeff Wright said.

Ryse Hydrogen—which provides [hydrogen fuel](#) to buses—is owned by English industrialist Joseph Bamford, the son of JCB chairman Anthony Bamford.

"We are delighted to announce that this morning I have agreed terms on a [deal](#) in principle with the Wright family for the Wrightbus factory and land," Bamford said.

Administrators Deloitte told AFP they would not comment on the deal until it had been signed.

Wrightbus is best known for supplying New Routemaster buses to Transport for London (TFL) under the mayorship of Boris Johnson, who is now Britain's [prime minister](#).

The Northern Irish firm—based in Ballymena and founded in 1946—was one of the province's largest employers.

As recently as 2016 the company was awarded a £62-million (\$77-million, 70-million-euro) contract to produce buses to ply London's streets.

But 1,200 of its 1,250 staff were made redundant when Deloitte was appointed administrator on 25 September after a period of waning demand for its low-emissions vehicles.

Union officials have been working to save the jobs as both parties brokered a deal and workers celebrated following its announcement.

The path to a sale was complicated over the matter of nearby land

associated with the factory premises.

A deadline for the deal was missed on Thursday, with tempers apparently fraying as owner Jeff Wright accused Bamford of being "disingenuous" whilst Bamford released a statement accusing Wright of raising the sale price.

The matter was resolved Friday with the donation of the land to the local council for business development.

"The outcome of the negotiations involved pragmatism in arriving at an arrangement which is ultimately in the best interests of the long-term sustainability of the bus manufacturing business and jobs in the Ballymena area," Wright's spokesman said.

Wrightbus' iconic red "double decker" vehicles with a sleek updated design were referred to as "Boris buses", becoming a flagship project for then-mayor Johnson.

But they were plagued with cost overrun and design issues—including ventilation problems, which saw passengers swelter in high temperatures.

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