

# Southend Council put weight behind returning Airshow



Crowds gathered on Southend's beaches for the 2012 Airshow

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SOUTHEND Council has thrown its weight behind fresh plans to relaunch the town's annual airshow later this year.

The new Southend Airshow and Military Festival is set to take place on September 12 and 13 next year.

Organisers hoped to bring back the show this year, but the Southend Airshow Community Interest Company found itself £70,000 short of the required £150,000.

This has now been overcome and the cash needed to stage the event has been promised by sponsors.

Lib Dem [Graham Longley](#), Southend councillor for enterprise, tourism, and economic development, thinks the newlook airshow will be a big boost to the local economy.

He said: "Bringing the airshow back restores one of the major events that we have had for a long time – and brings in a plethora of people into the town, boosting the economy.

"We are short on money at the council, but we have been working hard with the organisers to help them in any way we can.

"We can't really say at this stage the scale of the event, or how things will be done, but that will all be announced in time, when everything is in place." Headline sponsor is the Toomey Motor Group, which joined a broad range of businesses to help to bring back the show after it was scrapped by Southend Council

Donations from members of the public have also reached £1,800.

Dan Rodgers, event manager and head of military affairs, is working with the military to determine their availability for the airshow.

He said plans would fall into place once that is known Some aircraft will be based at [Southend Airport](#) for the duration of the event.

Mr Rodgers said: “I would love to say we’ve got the Red Arrows booked and this and that, but at the minute we’re dealing with a lot of paperwork.

“We should be in a position to make a big announcement in the next couple of weeks, though, sometime in early December.

“But what we really need are volunteers, so if anyone wants to help out, whether it be as a marshal, information point staff, litter picker or programme seller, then go to the website and apply.”

The event was cancelled in 2013 after the council cut its funding and an attempt to resurrect the airshow for 2014 failed after organisers fell £70,000 short of the £150,000 they needed.

But thanks to securing a primary sponsorship agreement with Toomey Motors, and other deals with Goldwyns accountants, BTMK, [Billericay IT](#), Candi Entertainment, the Skylark Hotel, Thames Towage and Urban Design and Print, among others, the airshow will fly again in 2015.

Tom Curtis, one of the volunteers behind the airshow’s return, has been working with council officials all year.

He said: “The best thing about the airshow returning is just that, that we will actually have a show at all.

“We’re hopeful the weather will be better in September, as May was always pretty variable, and we’re sure it will be a last hurrah to the Southend summer season.”

For more information about the event, visit [www.southendairshow.co.uk](http://www.southendairshow.co.uk)

### **[Traders](#): It will be a lift for late summer tourism**

TRADERS have welcomed news the Southend Airshow is returning.

The event is coming back next year after a three-year absence, with organisers confirming last month they now have funding in place.

The first airshow was held in Southend in 1912, but it did not become an annual event until 1986. It ran every year until 2012, when the council cut its funding.

Now a team of enthusiasts have secured the cash required to stage the Airshow and Military Festival and business owners in the town are looking forward to it.

The event had previously been held over the May bank holiday weekend, but is now scheduled for September 12 and 13, 2015. Paul Thompson, chairman of the Seafront Traders’ Association, said: “Traders are generally very keen to see it come back.

“Being in September, it will be much better for the seafront as bank holidays were busy anyway. Hopefully this will turn a normal September weekend into a really busy one.

“We will not know exactly how the new event is going to run for a while yet, but the organisers have done a really good job and the whole town seems to be behind it.”

The event was cancelled in 2013 after the council cut its funding and attempts to resurrect the airshow for 2014 failed over lack of money.

Not everyone is so happy with its return, though.

Justin Lane, owner of Saks pub, in Clifftown Road, said: “It kills our business.

“Regulars still come in, but we don’t get passing trade as everyone heads to the seafront.”