

MEDIA RELEASE

Renaissance Southend Ltd

For Immediate Release

GRAFFITI-GRANS, PAINT-POLICE AND 100 KIDS GIVE FESTIVAL ART WALL STREET-CRED!

Southend Festival's first art wall community project, sponsored by Renaissance Southend, attracted contributions from almost one hundred children of all ages as well as a surprisingly diverse mix of local people from a councilor and two community police officers to a 62 year old grandmother!

Under the theme of 'Southend 2020', South East Essex art students, local street artist Toska and the Southend Young Creatives worked with the public to create a collaborative vision of the future as part of the Southend Festival over two days.

The Family day invited children of all ages to paint on the wall what they wanted to see in Southend 2020. Almost 100 kids took part throughout the day, painting a range of 'must-haves' on the landscape backdrop.

"I was naturally delighted that Renaissance Southend sponsored the graffiti board as part of our contribution to the annual festival," said Mike Lambert, Chief Executive. "The theme of the board was Southend 2020 and although this was obviously a fun event it also gave local people of all ages the opportunity to paint their vision of Southend as it could be in 11 years time by when the current regeneration programme is due to be delivered."

Dave Taylor, art lecturer at South East Essex College, said: "Along with the expected mix of robots and flying cars, the general themes that came out of the day was that the children wanted to see more bright and green spaces, trees and flowers in Southend 2020 and more shops or entertainment around and on the pier."

For the second day, the other side of the art wall was used to create a 'Southend 2020' street art piece, a unique collaboration between local street artist 'Toska', Southend Young Creatives, College art students Jack Osbourne and Matthew Hugget and members of the public.

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Toska said: "I wanted to mix a traditional graffiti style with a message for the future of Southend so at one end I focused on both a vision of how the beach may be redeveloped in the future and at the other end I wanted to bring in more flowers and greenery. I think two of the most iconic buildings in Southend are the new College and the old Kursaal and so by including both we are showing that Southend's future relies on a mixture of both innovation and heritage.

"It was a challenging commission as I am used to working alone, so a lot of trust was needed to let other artists, students and members of the public work on various aspects of the piece. But everyone approached it with enthusiasm and it shows that we can all make a contribution to how Southend's future will look."

Wendy Bell, 62, a primary school teacher, helped paint the sea. She said: "This is a great idea to get local people thinking about Southend's future in such a fun way and to be encouraging people to engage in the positive aspects of Southend. I found it quite tricky to use the spray can and it helped me to appreciate that graffiti like this really is an art form – the young artists here were certainly very well prepared and so talented."

Councillor Mike Royston helped paint the beach. He said: "I really enjoyed helping to spray the sand effects. I am very interested in getting more art projects like this off the ground across Southend because, like the Southend Festival, it provides a chance to celebrate creative talent across the town and enables people to get directly involved in their town."

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Renaissance Southend was incorporated as a not for profit, private limited company on the 18th March 2005.

The Company is run by private and public sector Board of Directors who's Founder Members are Southend-on-Sea Borough Council (SSBC), East of England Development Agency (EEDA), Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), University of Essex (UoE) and South East Essex College (SEEC), supported by Government Office for the East of England and the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership.

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