

## Bournemouth prepares to bid farewell to Wheels ahead of its 2017 festival programme

**As announcements are made for yet another fun-filled year of outdoor events and festivals next year, Bournemouth Tourism is preparing to bid a fond farewell to Bournemouth Wheels Festival as it looks increasingly unlikely that the event will return in 2017.**

Bournemouth Borough Council made an initial commitment to underwrite and help fund three years of the wheels-themed family festival which has attracted over one million visitors since its inception. While there has been financial support from a range of sponsors and exhibitors, a significant commercial investment has not been secured and a decision on its return has to be made imminently to allow time for planning and contracting of services to deliver the festival.

Chairman of BTMB Des Simmons said: "To have to let go of the Wheels Festival in 2017 is not something that the board wants to see happen. We understood that 2016 would be the last year that the council could financially support the festival and it's looking increasingly more challenging to bridge the funding gap. The town has developed a growing reputation for delivering an 'event full' destination and the events already in place for next year clearly demonstrate that ambition."

Andrew Woodland, BAHA Chairman, commented that in looking towards 2017 Bournemouth has a very strong festival line-up. He said: "Events like Shake and Stir, Bournemouth Marathon, Bournemouth Food and Drink Festival, Bournemouth Arts by the Sea Festival and, of course, Bournemouth Air Festival are established in the event calendar bringing a vibrant offer that attracts well over one and a half million visitors and residents to the resort every year."

In a joint statement from Paul Clarke and Lisa Tucker, the respective Chairs of the Coastal and Town BIDs said: "We have backed the Wheels Festival since its inception and it has attracted over one million visitors over the three years raising the profile of Bournemouth to a wider audience. Whatever happens, it is hoped that the Southbourne Wheels Festival fringe event, one of the most successful events supported by the Coastal BID, can continue in a similar format in future years."

Head of Marketing and Events at Bournemouth Tourism, Jon Weaver, highlighted all those involved in creating, organising and developing the Wheels Festival. He said: "We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who support the festival – including Coastal and Town Centre BIDs, Bournemouth Tourism Management Board, Daily Echo and Wave 105. This was a brand new concept in 2013 to provide a free wheels themed festival in the destination that would appeal to a wide audience. In its first year it attracted several hundred thousand festival goers which is a real achievement for a brand new event. Despite discussions with potential parties to support the festival and looking at alternative ways of raising funds and reducing costs without undermining the quality of the experience expected of the festival, we are at a point where a Wheels Festival in 2017 is very unlikely."

In spite of the potential absence of Wheels, Bournemouth's festival and events calendar for 2017 is as busy as ever with a packed programme throughout the year culminating in new plans for the festive season.

Kicking off on 2 April with the 35<sup>th</sup> Bay Run, the calendar will once again see several thousand fun-runners and race goers flock to Bournemouth's spectacular coastline. For those who enjoy watching or taking part in sport and fitness events, there's also Race for Life on 11 June, Bournemouth Pier to Pier Swim on 16 July and Bournemouth Marathon Festival on 7 & 8 October.

Living up to Bournemouth's reputation for great outdoor entertainment and rich cultural offer, the Pinewalk Art Exhibition in the Lower Gardens opens again in May and the now well established and popular Bourne Free (Bournemouth's Pride Festival) is planned for 7 – 9 July. Throughout the summer there are On Stage live acts at the seafront and classical concerts in the park, finishing off in October with Bournemouth Arts by the Sea Festival.

For foodies with a penchant for great cuisine, there's Bournemouth Food and Drink Festival from 16 – 25 June and Southbourne Shake and Stir returns with evening events on 29 & 30 June, with the festival in full swing on 1 & 2 July.

The highlight of the calendar year is Bournemouth Air Festival, 31 August to 3 September. 2017 marks the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the award-winning and internationally renowned aviation event and festival goers can look forward to four memorable days of action and entertainment on land, at sea and in the air.

To round off the year in style, planning is already in place for an even better Christmas Wonderland experience across the town from the end of November.

Over the next six months many more events and festivals will be confirmed, with the most up-to-date major events and festivals listed online at [bournemouth.co.uk](http://bournemouth.co.uk) not least Arts by the Sea Festival starting on 8 October! Find out more online at [artsbysea.co.uk](http://artsbysea.co.uk).

**-Ends-**

Please contact Bournemouth Tourism PR office for more information  
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