

New addition to the Pier in Southend: Unveiling of sound bench

What could be better than sitting on a bench at the end of the Pier in Southend-on-Sea, watching the waves, breathing in the sea air, and enjoying an ice cream? How about sitting on a talking bench at the end of the Pier, listening to historic recordings about the area? Come to the formal unveiling of Southend-on-Sea's very own sound bench, and be among the first to try out this novelty.

Thanks to National Lottery players, a total of eighteen sound benches will be installed in communities across the county, with two others touring country parks, towns, and villages as part of the Essex Record Office project, *You Are Hear: sound and a sense of place*.

Each sound benches feature clips of archive recordings about the local area. The clips for Southend have been chosen by volunteers from the local University of the Third Age (U3A) groups. They include memories of childhood visits to the seaside and the Kursaal Amusement Park; reports on the Southend's important role in the Second World War; and music inspired by the town.

The formal launch of the bench took place on 14 June. Visitors will have the opportunity to try out the bench. What stories about the town will you discover? Will it bring back memories of your own experiences?

Sound benches have already been installed in Basildon, Colchester, Great Dunmow, Great Waltham, Harwich, Kelvedon, and Saffron Walden, with nine more to come over the next few months. Follow the trail of benches to see if you can find all of them. Then send us a picture of yourself with each bench, and tell us which clip is your favourite.

About the Southend-on-Sea bench

- The bench features six clips, compiled from recordings in the Essex Sound and Video Archive. They include people's memories of childhood visits to the amusement park or the seaside; reflections of the town's fishing industry; and

descriptions of the town in the Second World War, as well as music inspired by the town.

- This is the first of ten listening benches which will be launched across Essex over the summer of 2017.

About the Essex Sound and Video Archive

- The Essex Sound and Video Archive was established at the Essex Record Office in 1987. One of the most important audio-visual archives in the UK, its unique collections range from oral history, radio broadcasts, talking magazines, and dialect recordings to folk, classical, jazz and popular music from Essex. They date from 1905 to the present. Whether on 78rpm shellac discs, open reel tapes, cassettes, mini-discs, video tapes, or other historic formats, the Archive aims to preserve and make freely available any sound or video recording that reveals life and culture in Essex.
- *You Are Hear: sound and a sense of place* is a three-year, £276,800 project to digitise, catalogue, and make available many of the historically significant sound and video recordings in the Essex Sound and Video Archive. The project is mainly funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), with additional support from the Essex Heritage Trust and the Friends of Historic Essex.
- To find out more about the project and subscribe to receive updates, visit <http://www.essexrecordofficeblog.co.uk/you-are-hear/>
- For the full list of sound bench locations and the touring schedule, visit <http://www.essexsounds.org.uk/content/category/benches>
- The digitised recordings are available through the Essex Record Office's online catalogue, Essex Archives Online: <http://essexarchivesonline.co.uk/>, or our Soundcloud channel: <http://www.soundcloud.com/essex-record-office/>
- You can also experience the past and present sounds of Essex through our online audio map at: www.essexsounds.org.uk/

About the Heritage Lottery Fund

Thanks to National Lottery players, we invest money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about - from the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife.

www.hlf.org.uk

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Upcoming venues for touring sound benches:

- Jun-Aug 2017: Waltham Abbey Gardens and Great Notley Country Park
- Sep-Nov 2017: Belfairs Woodland Centre and Danbury Country Park

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