

Racing at Musselburgh on 3 February

✘ Musselburgh Warms Up for John Smith's Scottish Cheltenham Trials Day

Britain's deep freeze conditions continues to cast an icy chill over the racing industry, meaning Musselburgh's John Smith's Scottish Cheltenham Trials next Sunday 3 February 2013 takes on extra significance.

The East Lothian course has established its own Cheltenham Trials as an important staging post to the Festival proper and is preparing to offer a much sought after opportunity for trainers desperate to give their horses an outing.

Racecourse boss Bill Farnsworth is keeping in close contact with the BHA and is ready to spring in to action if further abandonments mean there is a requirement to stage an additional pre-Cheltenham trial race on the high quality card.

More than £100,000 prize money is on offer at what will be Musselburgh's richest jumps card and this reflects the ambitions of the management to make this a not-to-be-missed fixture.

Three £20,000 races include the card highlight, the Class 2 John Smith's Scottish Triumph Hurdle Trial, the John Smith's Scottish Champion Steeple Chase and the John Smith's Scottish County Hurdle.

And in keeping with providing a bona fide trials for Cheltenham prospects, Musselburgh has secured for the first

time Cheltenham Festival sponsors Albert Bartlett, which supports a three mile £12,000 novices' hurdle race, and the Country Gentleman's Association which underwrites Scotland's most valuable Hunter Chase, the £10,000 CGA Scottish Foxhunter Steeple Chase.

Bill Farnsworth said: "We really sympathise with those courses which have had to abandon racing and know from personal experience how painful it is to watch carefully laid plans slide from your grasp.

"It makes it even more imperative that trainers and jockeys get the chance to have a proper run out before Cheltenham and our John Smith's Scottish Trials day is ready to fill that gap.

"It has come on leaps and bounds since we started the concept five years ago and we have strengthened the card again this year by adding two new races, the Albert Bartlett Novices' Hurdle and the CGA Scottish Foxhunter Steeple Chase, which is Scotland's richest race for amateur jockeys.

"The quality of entries we receive improves year on year and it will certainly be buoyed by the cold snap which has wiped out many fixtures and frustrates all in the racing industry. We have spoken to the BHA and are ready to do what we can to ease the pressure on training yards in the build up to Cheltenham and later Aintree."

Fresh ground has been saved for the February 3 fixture and groundstaff are busy moving steeple chase fences, hurdles and running rail to provide the best possible ground. The going is currently good to soft, good in places.