

Musselburgh's New Year's Day meeting now behind closed doors

Musselburgh Racecourse's Betway New Year's Day meeting will now take place Behind Closed Doors (BCD).

The East Lothian course took the decision to stage the premier event without spectators following the Scottish Government's decision to limit outdoor sporting events to a maximum of 500 people with table service only.

Only the racecourse's Annual Members, racehorse owners, trainers and staff will be able to attend to raceday.

The traditional 1 January meeting had been heading for a 6,000 capacity sell out and was due to welcome world boxing champion and local hero, Josh Taylor, as a special guest.

Musselburgh said all ticket holders would be offered a transfer to future race days or a full refund.

Musselburgh Racecourse general manager, Bill Farnsworth, said: "It is very unfortunate as this is one of our best and biggest race days and one of our most popular, attended by a sell-out crowd.

"However, we all must play our part in keeping people safe and in light of the latest Government guidance on the Omicron variant, we feel the responsible decision is to make this a BCD event with only our Annual Members, horse owners, trainers and staff in attendance.

“On a positive note, we hope that the restrictions will break the spread of the Omicron variant so that we can look forward to the Scottish Festival Trials Weekend on Saturday 5 and Sunday 6 February.

“All ticket holders for the cancelled racedays on 1 and 3 January will be able to transfer to future race days or will receive a full refund. Racecourse staff will endeavour to process all transfers and refunds as quickly as possible.”

The six-race card (with three races broadcast live on ITV) includes the feature £30,000 Betway Hogmaneigh Hurdle Handicap, and with total prize money of £105,000, it is expected there will be strong entries heading to Musselburgh from the leading northern yards and further afield.