

Sprinters in the starting blocks for the mane event at Musselburgh

Athletes relish challenge as historic New Year's Day race event makes its return.

Runners will compete in one of Scotland's oldest sporting competitions as it makes a return to its traditional place in the sporting calendar.

The annual sprint at Musselburgh Racecourse is now in its 154th year, but the pandemic forced it out of its New Year's Day slot where it has been a popular annual fixture since 1999.

The New Year Sprint returns to Musselburgh welcoming athletes to compete in a 110metre sprint race with the winner receiving a top prize of £3,500.

It has been a top event on the open athlete sporting calendar since the 1870s, but was forced to take place mid-summer in 2020 and 2021 as a result of the Covid pandemic.

Now, finalists will be shortlisted after a day of heats on 30 December at Meadowbank Sports Centre, before the main event at [Musselburgh Racecourse](#)'s New Year's Day Meeting supported by Fitzdares.

Since the sprint has been held at Musselburgh it has been a huge attraction for the venue, which is typically packed with race-goers for the New Year's Day horse racing fixture.

Frank Hanlon, promoter of the New Year Sprint, said: "During

its long history, the 'Sprint' has produced many top-class competitors and this year is no different. Its even more special as the event returns to Musselburgh Racecourse after a two-year break.

"For this event, a handicap starting system has been designed to ensure that any runner, no matter what their ability, age or gender, has a chance of scooping the big first prize.

"We're looking forward to getting the heats underway and uncovering who will be competing in this year's main event."

The sprint final will be televised as part of ITV's racing coverage of the day's events, with runners taking place on the outer horse racing circuit used for flat racing, in front of the crowds gathered at the Grand Stand.

The Highland Fling marquee will host entertainment from 'The Funkwagen', a Volkswagen campervan which has been converted to include DJ decks – with racegoers able to enjoy many other entertainment options, including a wide range of bars and street food outlets.

Aisling Johnston, Commercial Manager at Musselburgh Racecourse said: "After two years without the New Year Sprint, it is hugely exciting to get it back in front of a roaring crowd.

"The course is in fantastic condition for both horse and human racing and its set to kick off the New Year with a bang."

The racecourse is also laying on a fleet of "first footer" ticketed buses from Penicuik, Dalkeith, Galashiels, Gorebridge, Dunbar, Haddington and Edinburgh which will ferry revellers to and from the East Lothian venue, which is a VisitScotland 5-star visitor attraction.

Advanced Adult tickets currently cost £40 – book before midnight on 31 December to save £5 per person – on the day, will cost £45. Children 17 years and under go free

A timetable for the full New Year's Day Sprint programme is available [here](#).

<https://www.musselburgh-racecourse.co.uk/tickets/new-years-day-1-1-23>

