

# **Top trainers head for Musselburgh's Scottish Cheltenham Trials weekend**

**A strong footballing theme and a flurry of entries from champion jumps trainer Paul Nicholls marks out Musselburgh as the place to be this weekend for racing fans.**

**The bet365 Scottish Cheltenham Trials over Saturday and Sunday (4-5 Feb) is widely regarded as a prep event for the big jumps festivals at Cheltenham and Aintree in March and April.**

This year the East Lothian course is putting up prize money totally £290,000 over the two days and the entries indicate high quality fields with previous winners heading back to East Lothian for a potential share of the spoils.

Recent Musselburgh winner Nayati is among the entries for the £40,000 bet365 Scottish County Hurdle on Saturday and the Donald McCain trained horse is looking to follow up on his New Year's Day victory when he landed the Hogmaneigh Handicap Hurdle over course and distance.

Other previous winners at the East Lothian venue include stablemate Collingham, Ruth Jefferson's Inca Prince and last year's winner Laura Morgan, who like Collingham, is owned by Dundee United director Jimmy Fyffe.

Captain Cattistock and Mighty Thunder, the last two winners of the £50,000 bet365 Edinburgh National, are among the entries

for the 2023 renewal of the near four-mile contest. The former, trained by Fergal O'Brien near Cheltenham, scored 12 months ago under Liam Harrison, who is likely to be in the saddle again.



Musselburgh Racecourse is ready to welcome the country's top jumps trainers – Pic by Alan Rennie

Mighty Thunder represents Milnathort's Lucinda Russell with Scottish interest also appearing in the shape of the Sandy Thomson trained Flower Of Scotland which won the Borders National at Kelso in December and is owned by former Musselburgh Racecourse director Ray Anderson Green, and another recent Kelso winner Just Don't Know, trained in Hawick by Paul Robson.

In the bet365 Scottish Stayers' Novices' Hurdle 13-time champion jumps trainer Paul Nicholls has 15 entries over the two days including Outlaw Peter, which is co-owned by former Manchester United legend Sir Alex Ferguson.

The most valuable race on Sunday is the £40,000 bet365 Scottish Triumph Hurdle, a Class 1 Listed contest staged over two-miles. For eight of the last nine renewals, the spoils have gone to a joint or outright favourite and Paul Nicholls' Afadil and Fergal O'Brien's Fils De Rio will both be popular with the punters.

Harry Derham, who used to be assistant to Nicholls, has made a good start to his own training career and he is represented by Fidelio Dreams in the bet365 Scottish Champion Handicap Chase.

Olly Murphy was formerly in the same role with Gordon Elliott and he has booked Aidan Coleman for the ride on Chasing Fire in the bet365 Scottish Supreme Novices' Hurdle.

The Warwickshire raider, who cost £170,000, is unbeaten in a point to point, a bumper and two spins over hurdles.

Musselburgh Racecourse general manager, Bill Farnsworth, said: "The entries over both days speak for themselves and the bet365 Scottish Cheltenham Trials promises to be a weekend of quality racing to remember.



Almost £300,000 prize money is on offer at Musselburgh's weekend festival – pic by Caledonia Photo

"Since New Year there has been a lot of heavy ground and adverse weather leading to quite a few abandonments which is unfortunate for the industry. Conversely, this time of year is when Musselburgh comes into its own, because we can usually provide decent ground which appeals to trainers looking to give their horses a nice prep race in the run up to the two main festivals.

"Together with support from the BHA, we have increased the prize money to £40,000 for Sunday's bet365 Scottish Triumph Hurdle, a Class 1 Listed race which is now rightly recognised as an important trial race for the JCB Triumph Hurdle at Cheltenham."

Gates open on Saturday and Sunday at 11am. For further

information and to book tickets visit  
[www.musselburgh-racecourse.co.uk](http://www.musselburgh-racecourse.co.uk)

Ends