

Council pulls plug on popular Musselburgh fireworks celebration

East Lothian Council have clipped the wings of Musselburgh's popular fireworks display held at the Honest Toun's racecourse.

The annual event in November will not go ahead this year – with council officials blaming concerns about disturbing wildlife in the neighbouring lagoons.

Last year the racecourse and the Musselburgh Common Good Fund contributed £40,000 to hand out more than 6,000 free tickets to local residents, with more spectators watching from vantage points around the track.

Council chiefs said that “following the completion of further restoration of the last two remaining lagoons at Musselburgh Links, which provides an invaluable landscape for both wildlife and recreation it has been decided that the public fireworks display in the town will not take place this year.”

Depute Provost, Andy Forrest, said: “A number of local residents have expressed concern in recent years about the close proximity of the fireworks displays at Musselburgh Racecourse to Levenhall Links and resulting disturbance to wildlife. Levenhall Links is a rich mix of grasslands, woodland, ponds, artificial wader scrapes and ash lagoons providing a range of habitats for wildlife and roosts for wading and seabirds and is a designated SPA (Special Protected Area).

“The completion of further restoration works, extensive tree planting, wildflower sowing and installation of viewing hides have transformed this previous industrial site into an

internationally renowned wildlife and recreational area. Unfortunately the disturbance from a major fireworks display is incompatible with the often fragile diverse habitats located here.



Damp squib – no fireworks at Musselburgh this year – Picture: Alan Rennie

“Both the Musselburgh Common Good Fund and East Lothian Council would like to thank Musselburgh Racecourse for their hosting of the fireworks events in recent years. We’re not unfortunately in a position to have a suitable alternative location for an event this year but wanted to advise the public well before November. We realise that this news will be a disappointment to many in the local community but we’re seeking to find a suitable alternative for 2024.”

Musselburgh Racecourse general manager, Bill Farnsworth, said: “We have been happy to host and support the annual fireworks event over recent years which was well loved by the Musselburgh community. We understand the rationale behind the decision not to stage the event in 2023 and hope that any

future events at an alternative location are equally a success."