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Champagne bar to bring

some extra sparkle to Musselburgh

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By NICK JURY

HORSE-RACING enthusiasts will be able to toast their success at a new exclusive Champagne bar to be opened at Musselburgh Racecourse.

More than £1 million worth of contracts have been put out to tender for existing franchises and new catering firms to bid for.

The contracts cover corporate functions, fine dining, seven bars, a bistro and a fast food outlet at the East Lothian ci

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It was the first time in six years that the venue has put its bar and catering contracts out to tender, in an effort to provide better facilities for its customers.

The award-winning Leith-based firm Heritage Portfolio has kept its contract to provide corporate hospitality and fine dining for race-goers.

As part of the deal it also invested in a new Pommery Champagne Bar, which it will be responsible for running.

Musselburgh's association with Pommery stretches back to 2005 when it won its exclusive supplier and sponsorship contract, after Heritage Portfolio brought the two together. Mark Miller, chief executive at Heritage Portfolio, said there is demand by race-goers, trainers and owners alike for the venture.

He said: "We have been working with Musselburgh Racecourse for over six years now and we are delighted to be able to extend that relationship. The whole Champagne bar concept at Musselburgh has been tested over the last two years, with its marquee facilities. That proved there was a strong demand for a permanent Champagne bar to open.

"As a venue the racecourse is very innovative and constantly looking for ways to change and improve their services. We thrive in this type of environment and indeed encourage it.

"The new Champagne bar will be a great addition to the racecourse facilities and there are more new initiatives in the pipeline which will ensure Musselburgh stays at the front of the field."

Heritage is also taking over the grandstand bar and has plans to introduce food for the first time for customers.

Musselburgh Racecourse general manager Bill Farnsworth said: "As part of the new contract Heritage Portfolio are financing improvements to certain facilities around the course, including the opening of a new Pommery Champagne Bar, which will be very popular on race days."

Market research for the track highlighted that it had to make changes to ensure Musselburgh maintained its excellent record for customer service, Mr Farnsworth said.

He added: "The racing and leisure industry is extremely competitive and only by constantly refining and improving our services will we stay ahead of the field and protect our position as one of the UK's leading racecourses."

In addition to staging 25 flat and jump race days a year the venue hosts an additional 100 events each year, attracting some 90,000 visitors.

Other initiatives to drive up customer numbers have included a Ladies Day, which helped get the racecourse nominated for the Marketing Excellence Awards Scotland.

Last year's Ladies Day, the sixth year it has been running, broke records when it became the first Musselburgh race day to sell out in advance.

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