

The Derby Festival 2026 – Update for Conservators

The 2025 Epsom Derby Festival was an operationally successful event, with world-class racing across both days. Racegoers enjoyed a safe Derby Festival Experience on the ground and millions more at home at home around the world saw 'Lambourn' become the 246th winner of The Derby.

Despite the adverse weather on the day which included a Yellow Weather Warning, the safety and security operation was highly complex, and the cross-organisational response to the reduced threat of Animal Rising was world-class in ensuring that the event ran without significant issues. The highlight of the Derby Festival was Coolmore Stud winning Oaks Stakes, The Coronation Cup and The Derby Stakes, all three Group 1 races and a rare event.

Epsom Derby 2026 planning has been underway since February 2025, and since then there have been a couple of key personnel changes in the Epsom team. Jim Allen is still in situ as the General Manager and Michael Drake remains in post as Operations Manager. This is the first time in a number of years that General Manager & Operations Manager return for a second Derby Festival which can only be good news for Epsom Downs Racecourse. Several other key members of the Team have changed but the Team are now settled and focused on delivering a fantastic Derby Festival in 2026.

The focus for the 2026 Derby Festival will be to begin the rejuvenation of The Derby and The Derby Festival following the record low crowd that attended in 2025. The Yellow Weather Warning at the 2025 Derby festival resulted in a crowd of just over 22,000.

Epsom Downs Racecourse and the Jockey Club are planning to invest c£6million in the 2026 Derby Festival to begin the rejuvenation of the Racecourse and Derby Festival and again deliver a world-class event that meets the expectations of today's stakeholder, from owner to jockey to paying customer to fans on the Hill, whilst resetting the operation of the event to match the expected volume of visitors. The £6m will be spent in a combination of operational and capital investment areas.

The Betfred Derby start time will revert to its usual position at 4-4.30pm, and whilst we are monitoring the ongoing threat of protestors there is no specific intelligence indicating a threat like 2023 at this stage.

There are two of the three main changes for 2024 to improve the experience across the event, which we would like to reproduce in 2026 again:

1. Change of facility at The Winning Post (in Lonsdale Enclosure) from a seated hospitality structure to a more relaxed, 'Ticket+' experience, named 'Cedrics'. This will again be priced at c.£200pp and appeals to a younger customer looking to upgrade their experience from the typical grandstand ticket. The design of the facility will be more colourful than the previous white marquee to better showcase The Derby Festival to fans on and off site. Next to this marquee, the Racecourse would like to erect a temporary 'covered seating structure' of c 466 seats to allow Press, Hospitality Guests and Annual members to obtain the best view of the racing.

2. Change of post-event music location, from Hyperion Lawn to the front of the Grandstand beside the Administration Building in the upper part of the Tattenham Enclosure. This move is to improve the safety and experience of the fans who want to stay and watch the after-racing music as well as those fans wanting to leave site through the main gate. A temporary structure will be erected in this area to accommodate the music and provide wet weather cover for customers. This area will be accessed via a bridge from the Grandstand enclosure into the Upper Tattenham enclosure to ensure the Footpath (51) leading to the Tunnel under the course can remain open for the Public to access the Hill/Downs.

After the 2025 Derby Festival a full and thorough review of the Derby Festival has been undertaken. As well as hoping to sell out the Grandstand capacities, the Racecourse hopes to attract a lot more people to come back to the Downs to watch the Derby for Free. As a result, we would like to create two temporary fenced

areas on the Hill, known as the 'Community Zone' and 'Derby Fest', both of which will include a range of attractions to encourage the public to attend the Derby Festival from the Downs. A range of improvements to customer experience and to the Race programme, as well as Prizemoney improvements are also planned.

The focus of the event build will again be to minimise inconvenience to other users of the Downs whilst, at the same time, enabling the team to operate efficiently. This was broadly managed very well in 2024 and 2025; however, some issues were highlighted between the travelling community and residents which are being discussed and action plans developed for 2026.

We are hugely excited about what's in store for the whole 2026 racing season, and in particular The Epsom Derby Festival, and look forward to welcoming everyone in June this year.

Jim Allen

GENERAL MANAGER