

DOUBLE WINNER FOR PUNTERS AT CARLISLE RACECOURSE

Two new facilities are being created for spectators at Carlisle Racecourse ahead of what is set to be a record-breaking summer season for the Durdar track.

A bar and barbecue area, which will feature a raised viewing platform for up to 400 spectators, is to open next month at a cost of £350,000.

And seating is to be installed for the first time at the back of the racecourse's tote stand, which is being re-vamped and re-named the Grafix Signs stand after a ground-breaking sponsorship deal with the Carlisle-based firm.

The barbecue, bar and spectating facility, which will replace some trackside car parking, will be operating for the first time at the afternoon race meeting on Monday June 14 when it will be officially opened by racecourse chairman James Westoll.

But before then, the new-look Grafix Signs stand will be in use at the course's next meeting on Tuesday May 18, which is Singles Night. It is hoped the 84 seats will be installed during the summer at the back of the angled stand, which looks head-on down the track.

John Baker, the racecourse's managing director, said: "These are very exciting times at Carlisle Racecourse. We have some great events coming up here this summer, so we are making sure the course is in tip-top shape for everyone.

"The two latest developments take our existing on-going investment up to nearly £3 million when you add all the drainage work on the course, the third racing track we are creating and the £1 million Lester Piggott Race Centre, which will open in June.

"We felt the tote stand needed smartening up and we are glad to work with a strong local company like Grafix Signs, with whom we have enjoyed an excellent working relationship for the past eight years during which time they have assisted us in our aim of improving the look and the feel of the racecourse. I believe this deal means we are the first racecourse in the country to have two separate sponsors for two different stands, Edinburgh Woollen Mill sponsoring our main stand."

The Durdar track is likely to host its biggest ever crowd on Saturday July 3 when an evening race meeting will be followed by an open-air concert by Jools Holland and his Rhythm and Blues Orchestra, with guest singer Alison Moyet. More than 5,000 tickets have already been sold for the event, which includes a firework finale.

Legendary jockey Lester Piggott will be at the track on June 23 when he will officially open the Lester Piggott Race Centre at the Bell and Plate meeting, exactly 40 years after he rode a winner at it.

The racecourse is also hosting the Cumberland Show for the first time ever on Saturday July 17.

For further details about events at Carlisle Racecourse this summer, go to www.carlisle-races.co.uk