# Fire breaks out amid rising tensions at Appleby Horse Fair



A dramatic fire erupted at the Appleby Horse Fair in Appleby-in-Westmorland, Cumbria, on Saturday afternoon, engulfing a tent, stall, and van in flames. Eyewitnesses captured the chaos on social media, showing large crowds gathering to witness the scene as dense smoke billowed across the fairgrounds. Videos posted online depicted a white van set ablaze, surrounded by a deteriorating atmosphere of panic and urgency as attendees rushed to save their belongings from the encroaching flames.

As the fire spread, fairgoers were seen hastily moving tables, chairs, and personal items out of harm's way. A small explosion prompted shouts for everyone to retreat as firefighters arrived on the scene, battling the flames amid cheers and gasps from the crowd. Fortunately, the swift response managed to bring the blaze under control before it caused extensive damage to the fair itself.

Despite the unsettling incident, the atmosphere at the fair remained vibrant. Onlookers continued their festivities, with families enjoying food from nearby stalls, seemingly unphased by the smoke that lingered in the background. This year's event, which draws an estimated 10,000 visitors predominantly from the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) communities, proceeded amid typical British weather, with rain forcing many to don waterproofs.

The annual Appleby Horse Fair, heralded as the largest traditional Gypsy event in Europe, has maintained its heritage for over 250 years. While it has only been cancelled twice—first during the foot and mouth outbreak in 2001 and again in 2020 due to COVID-19— the fair has not been without its challenges. In recent years, law enforcement has increased its presence at the event, with heightened concerns regarding safety and public order. This year's fair witnessed 42 arrests and the seizure of 20 vehicles; a notable increase compared to previous years, fuelled by proactive policing efforts and collaboration with agencies like the DVSA and the National Rural Crime Unit.

However, alongside the lively festivities, critical voices have emerged concerning the fair's rising troubles. A petition initiated by the Appleby Fair Communities Group has called for an end to the event, citing escalating costs, safety concerns, and illegal activities within the market area, where counterfeit goods valued at £500,000 were reportedly confiscated. They argue that the event has drifted from its traditional roots, urging local authorities to reconsider its future.

Moreover, as the popularity of the fair grows, so too do the associated animal welfare issues. The latest reports have indicated a spike in incidents, including animal welfare complaints, with 288 incidents recorded this year alone. This alarming trend has raised concerns among animal welfare organizations such as the RSPCA, which highlighted the need for responsible practices during the event to ensure the safety and well-being of the horses, many of whom are showcased in high-pressure situations.

As the Appleby Horse Fair continues its legacy amidst such challenges, the intersection of celebration, tradition, and modern concerns demonstrates the complexities surrounding this historic event. It remains to be seen how these tensions will shape the future of a fair that lies at the heart of a vibrant cultural tapestry, yet faces pressures from both within and outside its community.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14790171/Fire-breaks-Appleby-Horse-Fair-gypsies.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cumbria-58213988)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14790171/Fire-breaks-Appleby-Horse-Fair-gypsies.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/23583743.42-arrests-appleby-horse-fair-2023-20-vehicles-seized/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14790171/Fire-breaks-Appleby-Horse-Fair-gypsies.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/24402616.petition-calls-end-appleby-horse-fair/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/23583743.42-arrests-appleby-horse-fair-2023-20-vehicles-seized/), [[6]](https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/24245400.incident-levels-highest-since-2015-appleby-horse-fair/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[4]](https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/24402616.petition-calls-end-appleby-horse-fair/), [[5]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-cumbria-33034413)
* Paragraph 6 – [[6]](https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/24245400.incident-levels-highest-since-2015-appleby-horse-fair/), [[7]](https://applebyfair.org/news-0/2024/overworking-horses-significant-issue-appleby-fair)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14790171/Fire-breaks-Appleby-Horse-Fair-gypsies.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cumbria-58213988> - In 2021, Cumbria Constabulary implemented a Section 60 order during the Appleby Horse Fair, allowing stop and search without reasonable grounds. This measure was in response to intelligence about individuals intent on causing serious violence due to feuds between different groups. The order aimed to ensure safety and was accompanied by the presence of armed police to address potential situations swiftly and effectively. The police emphasized that those seeking to act violently were not welcome at the fair, which is cherished by both Appleby residents and the Gypsy and Traveller communities.
3. <https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/23583743.42-arrests-appleby-horse-fair-2023-20-vehicles-seized/> - The 2023 Appleby Horse Fair saw a significant increase in law enforcement activity, with 42 arrests and 20 vehicles seized. This marked a notable rise from the previous year, attributed to proactive policing measures. Collaborations with the DVSA and the National Rural Crime Unit led to over 120 vehicles being stopped, resulting in more than 20 offences being ticketed. The fair also witnessed over 200 traffic offence reports. Despite these incidents, the event was largely peaceful, with no significant public disorder reported.
4. <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/24402616.petition-calls-end-appleby-horse-fair/> - A petition was launched by the Appleby Fair Communities Group (AFCG) aiming to halt the annual Appleby Horse Fair. The AFCG cited concerns over high costs for various measures and clean-up, crime, safety, and pollution. They highlighted issues such as illegal activities in the market field, where counterfeit goods worth £500,000 were confiscated. The group expressed that the event had deviated from its traditional roots and was no longer something they were proud of. They urged the Appleby Town Council to stop leasing Fair Hill for the event.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-cumbria-33034413> - In 2015, two horses died at the Appleby Horse Fair after colliding while being raced at high speed. The RSPCA reported that the horses were being ridden and driven rapidly to showcase them to potential buyers. One horse died at the scene, and the other had to be euthanized due to its injuries. The RSPCA appealed for witnesses to the accident, emphasizing the need for control when riding or driving horses at speed to prevent serious injury or death.
6. <https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/24245400.incident-levels-highest-since-2015-appleby-horse-fair/> - The 2023 Appleby Horse Fair experienced the highest number of arrests and animal welfare incidents since 2015. The Multi-Agency Strategic Co-ordinating Group (MASCG) reported 288 incidents of animal welfare, leading to the holding of nine horses, two dogs, thirteen puppies, and two chickens at the end of the fair. The increase was partly attributed to higher temperatures and a greater presence of authorities. The fair also saw 42 arrests, up from 18 in 2022, and 89 more incidents than the previous year.
7. <https://applebyfair.org/news-0/2024/overworking-horses-significant-issue-appleby-fair> - The RSPCA identified overworking of horses as a significant animal welfare issue at the 2024 Appleby Horse Fair. The charity reported 438 interventions, including the death of a three-year-old stallion that collapsed after being overworked. The RSPCA noted that many incidents occurred at night and went unreported. They emphasized the need for responsible horsemanship to prevent such tragedies and highlighted the importance of the Best at Appleby Awards in promoting horse health and happiness.