# Appleby Horse Fair sees record arrests amid cultural celebration and safety concerns



The Appleby Horse Fair in Cumbria has once again attracted thousands to what is termed Europe’s biggest Gypsy festival, showcasing both vibrant traditions and underlying tensions. This year's event, running from June 6 to 12, welcomed approximately 10,000 members of the Gypsy and Traveller community alongside an estimated 30,000 visitors. The fair has over 250 years of history, renowned for its lively atmosphere; however, it is not without its challenges, as this year saw a dramatic increase in arrests and recorded incidents.

As the sun shone on Saturday, June 10, the fair reached a peak attendance, with many attendees dressed in finery despite the forecasted rain. Colourful horse-drawn carriages raced down the narrow lanes, drawing excitement from spectators. However, the Appleby Horse Fair social media outlets cautioned visitors to remain vigilant, specifically near the ‘Flashing Lane’, where horses moved at high speeds. The official communication highlighted concerns for safety, noting that the visibility and stopping distance of horses could pose risks.

However, alongside the festivities, the event was marred by serious incidents, including a fire that broke out on Saturday afternoon. A Ford Transit van and adjacent tents were engulfed in flames, prompting a swift response from fire services. Fortunately, Cumbria Police reported that the fire was not suspicious and no injuries occurred. Nonetheless, the disruptions highlighted the fair's volatility.

This year also marked a significant rise in policing presence. A total of 42 arrests were made—more than double the number from the previous year—as police cracked down on illegal activities and maintained order throughout the crowded fairgrounds. Alongside arrests, authorities issued over 200 traffic offence reports and seized several vehicles for various infractions. Those operational efforts were supported by Trading Standards, which confiscated counterfeit goods valued at over £500,000 from market stalls, reinforcing ongoing concerns about illegal trading at the event.

Animal welfare remained a focal point amid the revelry, with numerous organisations monitoring the care of horses throughout the fair. There were claims that 288 instances of animal welfare concerns were reported, indicating a growing awareness and responsive measures in place. Despite these issues, the fair also celebrated positive aspects, with 18 awards presented for best horse health and horsemanship, signalling a commitment to animal welfare among participating owners.

Debates continue to rage over the future of the fair. The Appleby Fair Communities Group launched a petition aimed at curtailing the event due to concerns about its impact on local resources, crime, and pollution. Critics claim the fair has strayed from its traditional roots, asserting that the current iterations have resulted in undesirable side effects overshadowing its cultural significance. Conversely, supporters argue that the fair is vital for both the Gypsy community and local businesses, promoting cultural heritage while stimulating economic activity.

This complex array of experiences underscores the dual nature of the Appleby Horse Fair: a vibrant celebration deeply valued by the Gypsy and Traveller community, yet also a site of contention reflecting broader societal issues. As the fair concludes, it leaves behind conversations about identity, community responsibility, and the balance between tradition and modernity.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14791909/Travellers-charge-streets-death-defying-speed-carriages-Appleby-Horse-Fair.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.itv.com/news/border/2023-06-07/owners-at-appleby-horse-fair-urged-to-take-extra-care-of-animals-in-hot-weather)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14791909/Travellers-charge-streets-death-defying-speed-carriages-Appleby-Horse-Fair.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.itv.com/news/border/2023-06-12/appleby-horse-fair-arrests-more-than-double-in-2023), [[4]](https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/23583743.42-arrests-appleby-horse-fair-2023-20-vehicles-seized/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://www.redwings.org.uk/news-and-features/eighteen-awards-best-at-appleby-2023), [[6]](https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/24245400.incident-levels-highest-since-2015-appleby-horse-fair/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/23583743.42-arrests-appleby-horse-fair-2023-20-vehicles-seized/), [[7]](https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/24402616.petition-calls-end-appleby-horse-fair/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14791909/Travellers-charge-streets-death-defying-speed-carriages-Appleby-Horse-Fair.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/24245400.incident-levels-highest-since-2015-appleby-horse-fair/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[7]](https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/24402616.petition-calls-end-appleby-horse-fair/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14791909/Travellers-charge-streets-death-defying-speed-carriages-Appleby-Horse-Fair.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.itv.com/news/border/2023-06-12/appleby-horse-fair-arrests-more-than-double-in-2023> - The 2023 Appleby Horse Fair saw a significant increase in arrests, more than doubling compared to the previous year. The fair attracted a large number of visitors, with 1,197 caravans and bowtops recorded, slightly down from the previous year's 1,231. The sunny weather on Saturday, June 10, contributed to the high turnout. Steph Cordon, Chair of the Appleby Horse Fair Multi-Agency Strategic Co-ordinating Group (MASCG), acknowledged the challenges posed by the large number of visitors and praised the efforts of all involved in ensuring a positive atmosphere. ([itv.com](https://www.itv.com/news/border/2023-06-12/appleby-horse-fair-arrests-more-than-double-in-2023?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.itv.com/news/border/2023-06-07/owners-at-appleby-horse-fair-urged-to-take-extra-care-of-animals-in-hot-weather> - As the Appleby Horse Fair approached, animal welfare charities, including the RSPCA, urged horse owners to take extra precautions due to forecasted hot weather. With temperatures expected to reach up to 24 degrees Celsius, fairgoers were advised to ensure their horses had regular access to water, were tied up in the shade, and were not overworked. RSPCA Chief Inspector Rob Melloy emphasized the importance of patience, as horses might be reluctant to drink in overstimulating environments. Additionally, visitors were advised not to bring dogs to the event to prevent heat-related issues. ([itv.com](https://www.itv.com/news/border/2023-06-07/owners-at-appleby-horse-fair-urged-to-take-extra-care-of-animals-in-hot-weather?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/23583743.42-arrests-appleby-horse-fair-2023-20-vehicles-seized/> - The 2023 Appleby Horse Fair concluded with 42 arrests and 20 vehicles seized. The fair attracted a large number of visitors, with 1,197 caravans and bowtops recorded, slightly down from the previous year's 1,231. The sunny weather on Saturday, June 10, contributed to the high turnout. Cumbria Police conducted extensive measures leading up to the fair, including an operation on the A685 in collaboration with the DVSA and stolen vehicle examiners from the National Rural Crime Unit. During the fair, police recorded significantly more arrests than in previous years, with 42 in 2023 compared to 18 in 2022. Additionally, more than 200 traffic offence reports were issued, and over 20 vehicles were seized for various violations such as obstruction and driving without insurance. ([newsandstar.co.uk](https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/23583743.42-arrests-appleby-horse-fair-2023-20-vehicles-seized/?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.redwings.org.uk/news-and-features/eighteen-awards-best-at-appleby-2023> - At the 2023 Appleby Horse Fair, 18 awards were presented to celebrate the best horse health, happiness, and horsemanship. The annual Gypsy Roma and Traveller gathering, the largest in the UK, took place between Thursday, June 8, and Monday, June 12, in Appleby-in-Westmorland. Appleby Horse Fair, centred around the trading of horses, has been in existence for at least 300 years and is very important to the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) community, with around 10,000 of GRT heritage attending the fair, as well as around 30,000 other visitors. Nine animal charities, all members of the National Equine Welfare Council (NEWC), sent staff to the fair to support the protection and wellbeing of horses, and the awards are organised to recognise the very best welfare at the event. ([redwings.org.uk](https://www.redwings.org.uk/news-and-features/eighteen-awards-best-at-appleby-2023?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/24245400.incident-levels-highest-since-2015-appleby-horse-fair/> - The 2023 Appleby Horse Fair saw the highest number of arrests and animal welfare incidents since 2015, partly attributed to hot temperatures and a higher presence of authorities. Despite last year boasting 'the best year yet' due to its prominence in reemphasising the cultural significance of the fair with guests such as the Archbishop of York in attendance, the 2023 fair was marred by the death of a 15-year-old boy. As presented in the Multi-Agency Strategic Co-ordinating Group (MASCG)'s recently released evaluation report for the 2023 fair, condolences were extended to the family and friends of Denis Ward. The teen died six days later in James Cook University Hospital, Middlesbrough, after he suffered a head injury during the fair. Appleby Fair is believed to date back to around 1775 and is significant in its cultural value as it is believed to be one of the largest annual Gypsy, Traveller, and Roma gatherings in Europe. While there is no formal organiser of the fair, MASCG was established in 2008 as a coordinating strategy for agencies to work together during the event and pave the way for an action plan for the next year's fair. Last year, on its busiest day—Saturday—the fair is considered to have drawn in approximately 20,000 people and hundreds of horses to the town, which regularly is only home to 3,200 residents. The report indicates that in 2023, there were 288 reported incidents of animal welfare, resulting in nine horses; two dogs; thirteen puppies; and two chickens being held at the end of the fair, a figure which has increased from 193 the year prior. This increase was attributed mainly to the greater presence of animal welfare organisations and hotter weather. Yet, the successful focus on ensuring animal welfare, particularly for horses, was mentioned in the report. Eighteen awards were handed out on June 9 for the best horse health, happiness, and overall horsemanship, not allowing a few welfare issues to overshadow the love and care that goes into looking after horses. ([newsandstar.co.uk](https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/24245400.incident-levels-highest-since-2015-appleby-horse-fair/?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/24402616.petition-calls-end-appleby-horse-fair/> - A petition has been launched in an attempt to stop a popular annual fair from happening. The Appleby Horse Fair is a divisive issue, with many supporters believing it’s beneficial for cultural and historical reasons, and it brings with it trade via tourists and visitors. Appleby Fair Communities Group (AFCG), which launched the petition, complains that it results in high costs for various measures and clean-up, crime, safety, and pollution. Another is the market field, where various goods are traded, but which AFCG said has ‘become a nuisance market’ with illegal activity. At the fair this year, Trading Standards confiscated counterfeit goods totalling a value of £500,000. A spokesperson from AFCG said: “People want to disassociate from this event, as it has moved away from its traditional routes it has become something we are not proud of. ([thenorthernecho.co.uk](https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/24402616.petition-calls-end-appleby-horse-fair/?utm_source=openai))