

Key facts about Hastings Country Park new Visitor Centre:

A world class nature reserve requires a first class visitor centre. Hastings Borough Council and Groundwork South are working together to build a new Visitor Centre at Hastings Country Park. The centre will be the first straw bale building in the town of Hastings.

Why do we need a new centre?

The current Visitor Centre:

- Has no running water or toilets for our volunteers, is damp and has no storage space
- Has no facilities for members of the public to rest whilst viewing site information
- Does not provide a quality visitor experience for a nature reserve which is the gateway to the High Weald
- Has no modern IT facility for interactive information on the site and its management

What is the purpose of the new centre?

The new Visitor Centre will:

- Provide new high quality information and education on the management, wildlife and landscape of Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve
- Provide modern IT facilities to access up to date information on the Reserve
- Provide comfortable surroundings for volunteers and visitors
- Provide a focus for wildlife management and monitoring

Will it have a restaurant, drinks licence, and be a venue for weddings and parties and be open late at night?

The planning committee restricted the opening hours from 9am to 5pm. The centre will not have a restaurant or an alcohol licence. It is only intended to provide tea and coffee and very light refreshments such as sandwiches, scones and biscuits. Members of the public told us they would like to see the centre used as a community facility. We have no intention of using it for weddings or parties. We may wish to have exhibitions and meetings in the centre at a later date.

Who will manage the centre?

Groundwork South will manage the centre through a centre manager. The centre manager will be responsible for running the centre, organising the volunteers and keeping the information on the site up to date. Our volunteers at the current visitor centre will move across to the new building.

What is the timetable for construction?

We envisage building the centre during the summer and autumn of 2015 for a summer 2016 opening.

What opportunities were there for public feedback on the proposals for a new centre?

Hastings Borough Council undertook extensive public engagement and provided opportunities for community feedback and input to the location and design and facilities for the proposed new centre.

Key dates were:

- August 23 2014: Open meeting held at the current Visitor Centre to inform preferred location
- August 26 2014: Groundwork South attended Fairlight Parish Council meeting to update on key dates for the project and invited comment
- September 05 2014: Groundwork South emailed Fairlight Parish Council on dates for consultation in Priority Meadow shopping centre, Hastings
- September 17 to 20 2014: Public drop-in consultations at Priority Meadow
- September 21 2014: Open consultation event at the current Visitor Centre for residents and visitors who did not attend the Priory Meadow consultations
- October 30 2014: Planning Forum at Hastings Town Hall. Local residents, including some from Fairlight, attended. Representative from Fairlight Parish Council spoke in broad support of the proposal
- December 18 2014: Planning Application submitted, planning notices erected in vicinity and notice placed in local paper inviting comment
- December 23 2014 to January 28 2015: Full public consultation on planning application
- March 04 2015: Planning permission granted by Hastings Borough Council