

The Existing Building

The Visitor Centre and adjacent adventure playground were built in 1995, as part of a scheme that also improved the car parking provision.

The centre currently comprises:

- ▶ offices for those members of staff who are based at the park
- ▶ public WCs
- ▶ a café with associated kitchens
- ▶ an ice-cream parlour
- ▶ a meeting/conference room
- ▶ associated ancillary accommodation, including plant and storage.

In 2019, the council constructed an outdoor canopy. This covered seating area invites a wider audience to enjoy the café, including those with dogs who are not usually allowed indoors. The canopy is roofed in solar panels, which produces energy for the adjacent centre. The amount generated is displayed on an internal screen. It is understood that the glazed balustrades were gifted in memoriam. Free Wi-Fi is also available within the centre.

The Visitor Centre is open:

10:00 – 16:30, October to March (except for Christmas Day)

10:00 – 19:00, April to September.

The building occupies an L-shaped footprint comprised of 2 deep rectilinear blocks set at 45 degrees to one another. A shallow pitched, hipped roof connects the two blocks and is finished in slate, with red clay ridge tiles. A two-storey element protrudes through the centre of the northernmost block and provides storage and a warden's office at high level. These upper storeys are only accessible via stairs.

Walls are random coursed stone to the north and south elevations, with vertical, black painted timber cladding to the east and west elevations. The stone corners are demarcated with ashlar stone quoins. The windows are of dark painted/stained brown timber, generally with expressed stone cills and lintels. The doors match the style of the windows.

Internally, the underside of the roof is visible from the circulation and café space. The roof structure comprises exposed glulam and the ceiling is finished in boarded, varnished timber. Due to the internal layout of the space, the clarity of the internal roof form is disrupted. In particular, a number of low, flat-ceilinged pods in the corner of the central café space, which act as storage areas, compromise the volumetric appreciation of the space. Storage is inefficient and additional chairs are stacked up in the corner of the café. This creates a sense of clutter and detracts from the quality of the visitor experience. The space has witnessed incremental changes as the needs of the park and users has changed over time and this is visible in the functionality and quality of the space.

The café offers food and beverages, which are served from both an internal and external servery. An additional ice cream parlour is located within the building adjacent to the main entrance door. This use was recently inserted into what was originally designed as a welcome desk/reception area, in order to provide a centre of activity to this side of the building.

The west elevation houses an external servery, which allows visitors to buy food and beverages without having to enter the building. This is located adjacent to the play-park.