**Dove Stone proposed visitor centre consultation**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

1. **Why does the site need a visitor centre?**

Feedback from thousands of people responding to visitor surveys and public consultations, carried out by the RSPB over the last five years, has highlighted a strong need for a visitor centre and improved facilities on site.

In response to this, the RSPB has created a proposal for a small visitor hub, which will enable all ages to discover more about Dove Stone, engage with RSPB staff and take part in a variety of activities; providing a fantastic experience for existing visitors.

Also in response to visitor needs, the proposed hub will include new toilets, a catering kiosk and shelter for visitors, ensuring people can enjoy Dove Stone in all weathers. There will be space for community use and education activities, and the opportunity to create more volunteering roles for the community, as this is currently limited by the lack of a building on site.

1. **What facilities will the visitor hub have?**

The proposed visitor hub will include space for engagement with existing visitors to Dove Stone – through activities, information boards and interaction - new toilet facilities, a catering kiosk and space for community use and education activities. It will also provide shelter for visitors, ensuring they can enjoy Dove Stone in all weathers. There will be office space for staff and volunteers from the RSPB and Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA).

1. **What are the benefits of having a visitor hub on site?**

* Provides a better experience for visitors to Dove Stone - whatever the weather
* New public toilets
* Improved visitor and community engagement – through face to face interaction, activities, information boards and volunteering opportunities
* Ensure the site is family-friendly
* Provides a meeting point for school, community and special interest groups
* Provides a catering kiosk for visitors
* Profits from the visitor hub will be used to maintain and improve the site for visitors and wildlife

1. **Will the existing toilets at Dove Stone be closed?**

The current toilets at Dove Stone are owned by Oldham Council. Public spending cuts have meant that most local authority owned public toilets in Oldham have been closed. It is therefore likely that these toilets will be closed if a visitor hub providing new public facilities is created.

1. **What access and facilities will there be for disabled visitors?**

In addition to the current disabled parking facilities, there will be improved access from the car park, a fully accessible building, disabled toilets and a drop-off point outside the visitor hub.

1. **What are the proposed opening hours of the building?**

This is to be decided but we are considering opening 7 days a week, every day apart from Christmas Day, which is standard for RSPB visitor centres.

1. **Will there be staff and volunteers based on site?**

The new building will provide office space for RSPB staff and volunteers as well as the Peak District National Park Authority ranger.

1. **Is an increase in visitor numbers expected?**

The RSPB’s main aim at Dove Stone is to engage with the current visitors to the site. One of the key reasons we are interested in upgrading the visitor facilities at the site is for the benefit of local people who regularly visit Dove Stone and to enable people to enjoy the site whatever the weather. We therefore do not expect large increases in visitor numbers.

1. **Where will the building be situated?**

The preferred location for the visitor hub is adjacent to the Dove Stone Sailing Club.

1. **Why is this the preferred location for the visitor hub?**

This location acts as a gateway to the site and a perfect starting point for a visit to Dove Stone, offering amazing views for visitors. It is near the car park and ensures ‘development’ is kept to one area of the site. This location also takes into account United Utilities and PDNPA restrictions on where building can take place at Dove Stone.

1. **What will the building look like?**

Please look at the drawings and plans on the blog

The RSPB has been working closely with the Peak District National Park Authority planners to provide a building design that will be in keeping with its beautiful surroundings.

1. **How big will the building be?**

The building will measure approximately 276 square metres. It will be a similar size and height to the existing sailing club building.

1. **Will the creation of the proposed visitor hub result in any changes to the car park?**

The car park is currently managed by Oldham Council. Due to the small nature of the development, it is expected that there will be minimal impact on car parking. A small number of additional parking spaces will be provided.

1. **Will there be an entry charge to access the new visitor centre or toilets?**

Access to the visitor centre and toilets will be free of charge to all. The car park will remain Pay & Display with free parking for RSPB members as is currently the case.

1. **If there is a catering kiosk in the visitor hub, what impact will this have on the concessions?**

We will be having discussions with the concessions during the consultation period. We hope to retain one or more of the concessions.

1. **Will the visitor hub create any jobs for the area?**

Three jobs are expected to be created.

1. **Is the visitor hub plan subject to any conditions/funding?**

Yes, it is subject to permission from Dove Stone Sailing Club to build in the preferred location, securing planning permission from the Peak District National Park Authority and the RSPB securing external funding.

1. **When is it likely to be built?**

2/3 years - subject to gaining all permissions and funding required.

1. **How much is the building expected to cost?**The building is likely to cost in the region of £250,000, with additional costs for site preparation, which would bring the total project cost to around £650,000. As a conservation charity, this exciting project could only go ahead subject to external funding**.**
2. **Why has a visitor hub not been built on site earlier?**

The RSPB has been involved with the Dove Stone site since 2009 and has been using this time to gather public feedback and develop ideas with visitors to the site.