

# The Spurn Visitor Centre

A safer Spurn that benefits everyone



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## THE SITE

Spurn is an internationally important nature reserve with sensitive areas that require a careful balance for both people and wildlife to benefit. Without this, Spurn's natural heritage will be at risk. Its unique location and habitats are like nowhere else in Yorkshire.

## THE NEED FOR A VISITOR CENTRE

The current visitor offer and facilities at Spurn are not fit for purpose, especially for an increasingly varied audience, attracted by the so-called 'Springwatch' effect. Recent years have seen a drop in visitor numbers by more than half. Existing facilities are not flood resilient and have a limited lifespan due to coastal erosion. Improved car parking is required to manage vehicle numbers and movements.

## THE PREFERRED CENTRE LOCATION

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's chosen location meets an exhaustive list of criteria, ranging from Heritage Coast and highways requirements, to visual and wildlife impact, and future sustainability and strategic location to manage visitor movements and interaction. It is a location that allows a state of the art, flood resilient building.

## SAFETY

Changes in Spurn's landscape in 2013 created an unprecedented tidal safety challenge, but also a new feature of tourism interest. This can only be met by maximising the engagement with all visitors, at the natural entry point at Spurn.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

East Yorkshire is at the forefront of a growing £15m regional 'nature tourism' market. The region already boasts industry-leading facilities attracting tens of thousands of visitors, driving additional tourism spend in local communities. Spurn should not be left behind in this opportunity to boost not only jobs and growth in surrounding areas, but the wider Holderness and East Yorkshire tourism zone.

The recent renovation of the Spurn Lighthouse now affords a new visitor experience and 128ft high, 360 degree vista



With the nearby YWT Kilnsea Wetlands reserve, Spurn has long been a mecca for both wildlife and people



The challenge of the 2013 storm surge has led to new tourism innovation such as the Spurn Safaris, attracting hundreds of visitors each year



# A SAFER SPURN THAT BENEFITS EVERYONE...

As Yorkshire's very own 'land's end', and with an array of habitats found nowhere else in the county, Spurn's iconic landscape has been a draw for visitors for generations.

A constantly changing feature of Yorkshire's coastline and always at the mercy of the elements, no two days at Spurn are ever the same. This creates a relentless challenge for those who are responsible for its care.

Spurn played host to an historical average of around 45,000 annual visitors - with a peak of 70,000. This footfall supported local businesses and the community, but natural events and the tough challenges of looking after Spurn means that today, visitor numbers have fallen to less than half of that witnessed in the site's heyday.

A major storm surge and flooding event in 2013 compounded this situation, creating new and unprecedented safety concerns that now underline how Spurn, its visitors and wildlife are safeguarded for the future.

This document sets out the crucial need for a new purpose-built visitor facility at Spurn.



Simon King OBE  
Naturalist and  
Broadcaster

*"Spurn is a magnet for thousands of birds and a myriad of other creatures...places like Spurn need to feel comfortable, accessible, safe and familiar for people - that's a good thing. I wholeheartedly endorse the introduction of a visitor centre at Spurn."*

*"Spurn is a truly remarkable place and a jewel in the crown of the Yorkshire and North Sea coastline. Its natural history credentials are amongst most important of any site in the UK. As a precious sanctuary for resident and migratory wildlife, how we allow people to engage with Spurn's landscape is pivotal to its future protection. This visitor centre is critical in guiding people toward the safest, most enjoyable and least damaging way to immerse themselves in such an astonishing location."*



Professor  
Sir John Lawton FRS  
Author *The Lawton  
Review - Making  
Space for Nature*



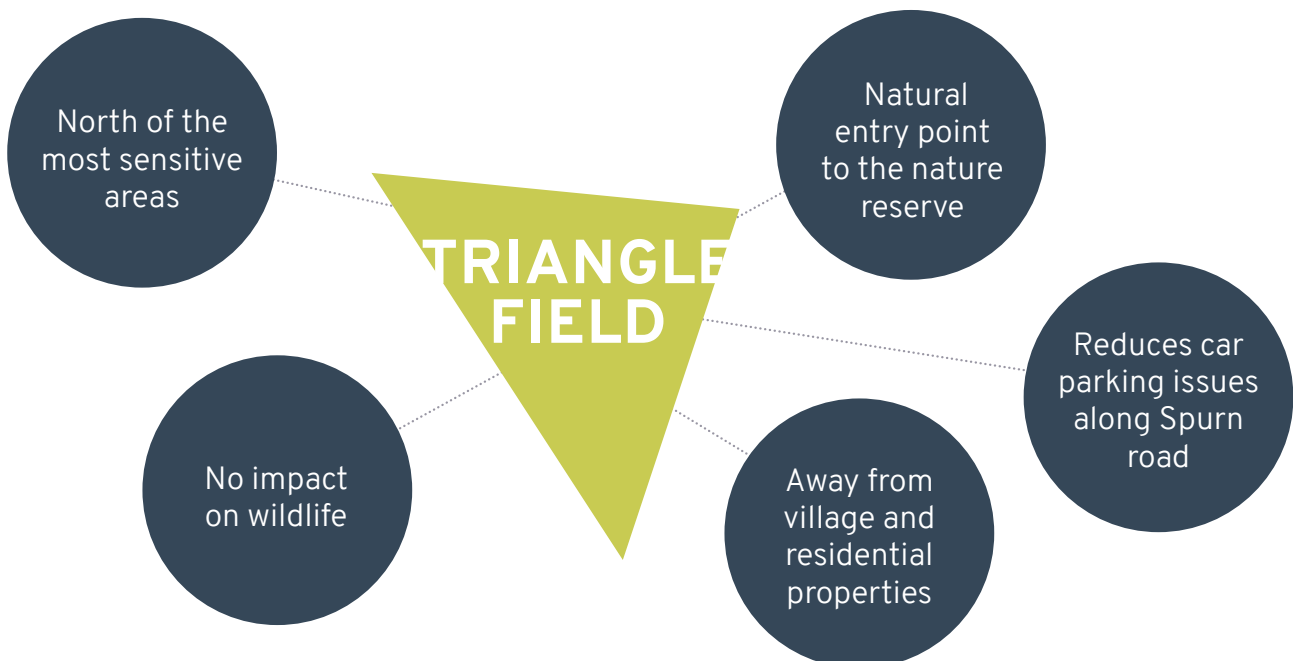
SPURN HOLDS THE MOST IMPORTANT  
UK AND EUROPEAN DESIGNATIONS  
FOR ITS OUTSTANDING WILDLIFE

# SPURN VISITOR CENTRE PROPOSED LOCATION

**The preferred site of the Triangle Field, just north of the nature reserve, as submitted for planning permission for a Spurn Visitor Centre has been decided upon following extensive consultation with a range of statutory partners and local stakeholders. The table below shows some of the key reasons for the current chosen location.**

Spurn has always been and remains, a highly complex and unusual site on which to develop visitor facilities; a flat and exposed location, with combining factors of residential neighbours, the need for flood resilience and wildlife conservation considerations make for a decision which will affect many in its outcome.

	Natural entry point to the site for visitor management	Ability for flood resilience	Allows for construction of purpose-built facility	Car parking provision	None or minimal impact on biodiversity	Away from residential properties	Wildlife viewing opportunities
Triangle Field (preferred)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kilnsea Wetlands	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
Clubley's / How Hill	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
Well Field	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Blue Bell / Southfield Farm	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗



# WHY CHOOSE TRIANGLE FIELD FOR THE NEW CENTRE?

**For the safety and enjoyment of visitors, it is vital they are captured at the most natural – and one of the narrowest – entry points to the site. This allows the maximum number of people to be engaged with before they enter the nature reserve.**

A short distance from the current temporary visitor hub at The Warren, Triangle Field offers this key location, along with suitable land directly opposite for car parking. This location is not within immediate view of local residential properties, and the flood bank and scrub offer a natural screening, minimising the visual impact of the centre.

Tourists expect to be able to park close to the point of entry to a site. This is demonstrated by the current parking challenges faced by Spurn along the access road. Triangle Field and the associated car park would be less than 250 metres from the current site entrance.

The overall land footprint of the proposed centre is equivalent to less than 0.2% of Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's overall land holdings at Spurn (330 hectares).



With the current site entrance indicated (operational vehicle access gate, temporary visitor hub and Warren parking area) this map shows the relative distance for all proposed sites from the existing visitor entry point. All proposed locations sit within, or immediately adjacent to Environment Agency Flood Zone 3, with no single site offering any greater protection against a major flood event. The proposed centre will meet this challenge through a purpose-designed, flood resilient lower storage area below the main visitor facilities.

# WHAT IF THE SITE FLOODS?

**Modern technology makes coastal flooding events predictable. In the event of an advanced flood warning, the site and visitor centre will be closed under an Amber alert – taking a much more cautious approach to flood risk and safety.**

The proposed centre has been purpose-designed with a flood-resilient basement storage area on its lower floor. There will be no important operational or visitor facilities in this part of the building. Crucially, this allows the centre to become operational again within days of flood waters receding. By contrast, when the flooding of 2013 affected the current Blue Bell café and office, the building remained uninhabitable for 8 weeks, severely affecting visitor facilities. This was one of a number of factors that led to a reduction in visitor numbers, impacting on local businesses.

The specialist construction of the proposed visitor centre also means that as the Spurn landscape changes, or the flood risk increased, the modular structure can be moved to a new location at minimal cost, without the need to create another brand new facility.

The flood risk has been identified as the same for all other potential locations in the Kilnsea area.

Flooding implications in relation to the development of the proposed centre - and its specialist design - have been considered by a number of organisations and statutory bodies. The Environment Agency, Humberside Fire & Rescue and the East Riding of Yorkshire Council planning officer have confirmed they have no concerns with the proposals in regard to flooding.

- 💧 **Flood events predictable**
- 💧 **New building will be flood resilient**
- 💧 **Proposed existing buildings not flood resilient (more hazardous)**
- 💧 **Other proposed locations in same flood zone**



Flooding at the current toilet, car park and Blue Bell café area of Spurn following a major storm surge in December 2013. The facilities were then closed for around 8 weeks while repairs were undertaken. The proposed new centre and combined visitor facilities will be flood resilient, and, after a similar event, would be operational again within a matter of days.

# OTHER SITE OPTIONS

## WHY NOT BUILD THE CENTRE AT THE KILNSEA WETLANDS RESERVE?

**Kilnsea Wetlands is around 2 ½ km (1.5 miles) from the entrance to Spurn.**

With such a significant distance to the traditional entry point to the site, it will be difficult to capture the majority of visitors to ensure that safety and other information can be provided. It is also likely visitors will continue to drive on past any centre to park on the access road, exacerbating many of the parking issues currently experienced in the village.

Kilnsea Wetlands is also not owned by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and is part of a habitat compensation scheme.

## WHY NOT USE THE BLUE BELL AS A VISITOR FACILITY?

**As a former home and public house, the Blue Bell is not a purpose built visitor centre.**

In 2013, following the last major flooding event, the Blue Bell was closed for 8 weeks due to the impact of flood waters. This is not an acceptable scenario for a modern visitor facility. The layout of the Blue Bell is not suitable for modern disabled access as it was never designed for this purpose. New visitor facilities must endeavour to meet stringent access guidelines and the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust want to achieve this.

The location of the Blue Bell (in Kilnsea Village) is still a considerable distance from the narrowest entry point to the nature reserve (around 0.8km , 0.5 miles), making it difficult to capture the majority of visitors to provide safety and other information. The current car park provision at the Blue Bell is also highly susceptible to flooding, and not sufficient for current or predicted visitor numbers. There is no suitable land available to create additional, immediately adjacent car parking for visitors.

The proximity of the Blue Bell (and adjacent car park) to recent coastal erosion processes determine that the site is unlikely to offer a long-term solution.



The severely limited current car parking provision at peak periods leads to damage to verges, visual impact and safety concerns

## WHAT ABOUT WELL FIELD OR SOUTHFIELD FARM?

This site has been proposed by some as an alternative to the Triangle Field. Data from the Spurn Bird Observatory (SBOT) in conjunction with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and independent ecologists' Footprint Ecology, recognised that important species such as the whimbrel (a migratory wading bird) use this area for feeding and roosting at times during the year.

As a nature conservation charity, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust is not prepared to build a structure on land that is used by birds or other important wildlife. This location has therefore been discounted on conservation grounds. In addition, it is also around 480m (0.3 miles) from the entrance to Spurn creating visitor management challenges.

These same issues apply to Southfield farm which has also been recommended as a possible location.

# HOW BETTER FACILITIES WILL HELP PROTECT SPURN'S INTERNATIONALLY IMPORTANT WILDLIFE



Visualisation of the proposed visitor centre from the Humber flood bank; showing natural banking and scrub screening, flood resilient lower floor and existing bird hide on the adjacent Canal Scrape

**Spurn can be a fragile and sensitive place, but it has welcomed thousands of people in different guises for decades. Due to its enduring fascination amongst visitors, people will continue to come and visit Spurn, whatever changes the site may experience.**

Many successful nature reserves demonstrate that wildlife and visitors can go hand-in-hand. However, this is only possible with careful and easily available understanding of the impact that a person's visit can make. A dedicated centre, naturally funnelling people onto the site with a range of informative measures is the best way to achieve this – a model utilised by many organisations such as the RSPB and National Trust. The provision of all necessary facilities such as a café, car parking, toilets and customer information in one location will also encourage visitor flow. This is not the case at the current time.

In turn, educating and inspiring visitors means they will be more likely to adhere to access routes and other advice across the site – this is the best way we can protect Spurn and its wildlife for the future.

Experience from other visitor centre facilities determines that a large number of visitors are often likely to remain within close proximity to the centre itself, minimising pressure on wider, more sensitive zones.

## KEEPING SPURN WILD

Spurn's remoteness, habitats and unique location are what have always, and will continue to attract visitors. The site also has an extensive human history, borne out by the dozens of structures, roads and rail lines still visible today.

It is this fascinating combination of wildness and human influence that makes Spurn special. The future offers an opportunity to reinvigorate many of Spurn's natural features. Old and dangerous structures (some containing asbestos) are already being removed, and there are plans to continue this process – returning parts of Spurn to the traditional habitats of dune and grassland where wildlife can thrive. So many of the UK's iconic landscapes balance wildness with a need to welcome people; Spurn shouldn't be the exception.



# THE MISSING LINK IN A NATURE TOURISM NETWORK

East Yorkshire is at the forefront of a growing £15m 'nature tourism' industry welcoming visitors from across the UK and Europe. The country's leading tourism advisors now place wildlife watching as a mainstream visitor pastime, with a greater level of participation than traditional activities such as theatre-going or safari parks. This audience is no longer one of those with a specialist interest, but a wide-ranging and often family orientated group inspired by TV programmes like Springwatch.

Other nature tourism locations in East Yorkshire are already reaping the benefits of this boost. Visitor Centres like RSPB Bempton Cliffs and YWT Living Seas Centre are based within the Flamborough Heritage Coast and immediately adjacent to both Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designations for wildlife. Yorkshire Water's Tophill Low will open a new welcome centre in 2017, alongside the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and within Flood Zone 3, the same category flood zone as Spurn. With both the voluntary and private sector continually investing in industry-leading facilities for visitors elsewhere, Spurn remains the missing link in a network of regional wildlife watching hubs, capable of driving a vibrant local economy for the communities that surround these sites.

Right now, the tourism offer at Spurn is not fit for purpose. Today's broad range of visitors – both specialist and beginner – expect to find facilities that reflect a modern, accessible



and professional welcome at major landmark locations. This is something that East Yorkshire and Yorkshire as whole is striving for as a leading global tourism destination. The current patchwork of visitor provision at Spurn is not meeting this need.

To ensure that visitors have the safest, most enjoyable visit to Spurn – and one they'll want to repeat, means creating a facility that can stand side-by-side with others across the region, and the rest of the UK.



A new visitor welcome centre at Tophill Low opening in 2017 is part of a suite of industry leading nature tourism facilities in East Yorkshire. Spurn has the opportunity to add to this growing market.

# A DUTY OF CARE

**Spurn is a complex site with tidal areas that may be cut off at certain times, and large, sometimes hidden, man-made structures. However, many of these factors are what make Spurn so intriguing and exciting for visitors.**

As land owners, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust have a responsibility to protect against people's interaction with old military structures, the tides, and natural phenomena like brown tail moths. This can be done extremely effectively when communication is done through a single point of entry. A purpose built centre offers this solution, as well as innovative and engaging ways to inform visitors, such as visual media, to highlight dangers such as tides.

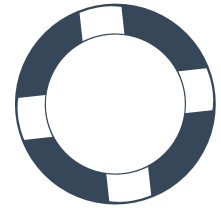
## **A HISTORY OF PARTNERSHIPS**

**Yorkshire Wildlife Trust have managed land at Spurn since 1959.**

Partnerships forged during that time remain today, such as those with the RNLI Lifeboats and Ports Authority ABP. Throughout that time, the Trust has also allowed access for dedicated migratory bird research, which also continues to this day.

In recognition of this, partners such as the RNLI will utilise parts of the proposed new centre for equipment storage, and all residents within the Easington Parish will benefit from free access to the centre and car park, to allow their continued enjoyment of the site.

THE PROPOSED NEW CENTRE AND ADJACENT CAR PARK PROVISION OFFER A SINGLE, NATURAL POINT OF CONTACT FOR ALL VISITORS, ENSURING SAFETY AND ENJOYMENT CAN GO HAND-IN-HAND



The new centre will be located with an extended car parking area directly opposite (unlike the current two small car parks in separate locations)

# A DECISION FOR THE FUTURE

**Building a visitor facility at Spurn is not just about the communities of Kilnsea and Easington.**

An industry-leading visitor hub with tens of thousands of visitors has the potential to drive economic benefits far beyond the centre itself; to wider villages and towns across Holderness and as far as Hull, as people make a trip to Spurn an integral part of their visit to East Yorkshire.

From pubs to accommodation, shops and cafes, this ripple effect of in-direct economic benefit has been demonstrated in other locations such as Bempton Cliffs.

For communities with poor transport links, local jobs are essential - and there will be direct benefits to those living on the doorstep of the new centre.

The facility will require additional staff, and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust has committed to continuing and expanding its highly successful trainee and apprenticeship scheme. These are opportunities for local young people, available where they live, without the burden of travelling outside of the area.

The need for a visitor facility is acknowledged by the local community, and this has been referenced at the planning committee. Those who remain opposed have done so in respect of the proposed location. Yorkshire Wildlife Trust have invested significant time and financial resources to find the best location and have demonstrated that the preferred location is the most suitable across a wide range of factors.

East Yorkshire is already leading the way in the very best wildlife-watching tourism facilities - Spurn cannot afford to be left behind in this prosperity.



## Awards

The Spurn Lighthouse renovation has already won praise for both architectural and visitor facility merit

# £30m

Estimated income to East Yorkshire from Nature Tourism by 2020



The England Coast Path opens, Spurn will become an iconic location on this brand new national walking route



WITH CURRENT FACILITIES THAT ARE NOT FIT FOR PURPOSE, A VISITOR CENTRE IS THE ONLY WAY TO SECURE THESE OPPORTUNITIES FOR A NEW GENERATION OF GUARDIANS AT SPURN

Spurn National Nature Reserve  
Yorkshire Wildlife Trust  
The Blue Bell  
Kilnsea  
Hull  
East Yorkshire  
HU12 0UH

[spurn@ywt.org.uk](mailto:spurn@ywt.org.uk)

Spurn Manager  
Mr Peter Waddingham  
[peter.waddingham@ywt.org.uk](mailto:peter.waddingham@ywt.org.uk)



Working in partnership to develop the Spurn Visitor Centre



**Yorkshire**  
Wildlife Trust



Image by Mike McFarlane