

General outlines for Visitor Centres

An important task for conservation is to inform the public about nature. Especially protected areas.

Visitor Centres are centres for visitors in a nature area. The centre will describe, explain and make people understand the values in the area – and inspire people to spend time there. It's supposed to be a gateway into nature in general and Zuvintas in particular.

Indoors and outdoors

A Visitor Centre may be one or several buildings with information and activities – indoors and outdoors. About science, about experiences and about the history of man in the area.

A Visitor Centre can't stand alone. You also need signs, trails, guidance, activities, brochures, books and websites.

The Visitor Centre may cover a small area, a big area, a province, a county, a kind of habitat or some other sort of theme.

Purpose

The purpose of the Visitor Centre is to through exhibitions, activities and guidance...

- Increase the knowledge about a nature area – in biology, science cultural history and experiences.
- Explain what is happening in nature – and why.
- Guide the visitor about what to see, do and experience in the area – as well as how to do it and get there.
- Motivate the visitors to behave in a way which is acceptable to nature.
- Create an understanding for the value of maintaining nature areas in general and Zuvintas in particular.
- Stimulate the interest for nature, nature conservation and studies.
- Provide knowledge about the cultural history in the area.
- Spread knowledge about other nature reserves in the county.

Visitors

When it comes to the visitors - don't ever forget the large public. At all ages. Also focus on teachers and school-activities.

Questions to ask yourself

...if you are interested in building a new/better/other kind of Visitor Centre.

Where?

How many will come? If more? Or less? And who?

What will you tell them? And how?

How will the visitors move around? Where will they arrive?

Design of the building? Identity? What will the building itself tell about you and your area? Do we send the right signals? Are we and the building environmental friendly?

Indoors? The exhibition? Content? Stories? Design? Size?

The costs? Who will pay? What can we afford? Now and in the long run?

How do you want it outside the building?

How can the local people participate?

Activities?

Opening hours?

Staff?

Entrance?

Outdoor exhibitions? Temporary exhibitions?

Broschures, information? Where and how?

Accessibility? What about small children? Old people? Disabled?

Sales? If yes, what and why?

*What do we want with everything? Write it down! Try it on a regular basis!
If necessary - rewrite.*