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## Natural visitor centre, West Bretton

Sited in a sculpture park, this addition by **Feilden Fowles** graces its sensitive context with a fittingly subtle form.

UNITED KINGDOM — TEXT: ISABELLE PRIEST

Inspired by looking more to land artists than other architects, the design by London-based Feilden Fowles for a new €5.4 million additional visitor centre at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) rises from the fabric of its site in a sculptural and poetic form appropriate to the works on

display around it.

Commissioned by invited competition, the proposal is intended to spread visitors across the 500-acre site and increase capacity to 500,000 per year. The new centre will enhance visitors' experience at the southern entrance to the park

and contribute to YSP's long-term financial sustainability. The low-rise rammed earth building will comprise a 140 m<sup>2</sup> restaurant, a 125 m<sup>2</sup> gallery space, an 80 m<sup>2</sup> public foyer, and a 50 m<sup>2</sup> shop. The project is due to complete in 2017, in time for the park's 40th anniversary.

↓ The new visitor centre will include a restaurant, gallery, public foyer, and shop.





Sited on the hillside within a former quarry, the form of the building is derived from creating a threshold with a single entrance as a protective wall from the motorway and car park. 'The primary tapered form is mute to the car park, while the form draws visitors through the building before opening up to the park where the closing rear wall is fully glazed, guiding visitors towards distinct views towards the Lower Lake and Bretton Hall,' explains architect Fergus Feilden.

The approach elevation will be constructed of rammed earth stabilized with concrete (also used by Feilden

↓ Located in West Yorkshire, the park is also home to the Hepworth Wakefield gallery by David Chipperfield.

Fowles at the Lea Centre in Bath). This method will create a sedimentary patina that relates to the sandstone below, helping the building to resonate with its geographical and geological location, an aspect attractive to the planners. 'As a practice, we specialize in sensitive sites,' Feilden explains, 'Tonally, formally, and in weathering, the new visitor centre is a subtle building.'

The building is also intelligent in its environmental impact, going beyond the use of rammed earth as an aesthetic element. Inside, it incorporates a pioneering low-energy control system

using unfired clay bricks to provide a passive humidity buffer, maintaining favourable conditions within the gallery. This is combined with a highly insulated envelope, natural ventilation, air-source heat pump, and a dense moorland green roof to achieve a robust and passive design approach.

The new gallery is distinguished by an *in situ* concrete sawtooth roof, veiled in translucent GRP panels, ensuring a soft northern light for the display of artworks. The interior design comprises Douglas fir timber structures, polished concrete flooring using aggregate from the site, and lime plasters.

The project continues a series of developments at YSP that began with the opening of Longside Gallery (2001), the main visitor centre (2002), the introduction of the Underground Gallery (2005), the transformation of the estate Kennel Block into a learning centre and café (2011), and, most recently, the refurbishment of the Chapel (2014). ◀

**VISITOR CENTRE, YORKSHIRE SCULPTURE PARK, 2015–2017**

Architect	Feilden Fowles
Established	2009
Client	Yorkshire Sculpture Park
Address	West Bretton, Wakefield, West Yorkshire
Info	<a href="http://www.feildenfowles.co.uk">www.feildenfowles.co.uk</a>

↓ Site plan

