

Variation of a planning condition

APPLICATION NO: 3/2014/1094

Retrospective application for a visitor centre, comprising a car park, five livestock shelters, one storage building, one polytunnel and one children's play area.

Planning condition no 2: The use of the visitor centre to which this permission relates shall be restricted to dates between 15 March and 30 September inclusive and shall only be open at weekends and bank holidays and only on weekdays during school holidays; and the opening hours shall be restricted to between 9.30am and 5pm.

REASON: To comply with the terms of the application and in the interests of the amenities of the locality in order to comply with the requirements of Policy DMG1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy Adopted Version.

The application is to vary the opening times from the original consent to bring the operation into line with other similar attractions and businesses. The request is to enable the business to be open from 8.00am - 9.00pm from Monday to Saturday and 9.00am – 5.30pm on Sundays. The huge investment in the new education centre and playbarn also mean that it is not financially viable to only open between March and September. The new facility means that there is sufficient space for indoor activities in poor weather whilst still ensuring that farming and the environment is at the core of everything on offer.

Whilst it is unlikely that these hours will be every day this will allow the flexibility to offer educational visits and other activities first thing in the morning through into the early evening.

Many organisations seek to arrange visits in the early evening such as the Scouting Association and Young Farmers Club. Other groups with an interest in the countryside and environment may include the Women's Institute, Church Groups etc

The increased opening times will allow groups to meet and enjoy light refreshments before undertaking a farm walk or undertaking activities in the new education centre.

In addition to the expected group meetings it would also be possible to offer children's parties or other group activities which start with a light evening meal and then continue with a range of activities in the adjacent education centre and play barn.

Windmill Animal Farm at Ormskirk is open till 7pm for groups and visitor activities.

The Wacky Warehouse play centres open until 9pm, Giddy Kippers, Nelson is open till 7pm.

Whilst the offering at Hawkshaw Farm is not directly comparable to these other locations they all have the flexibility to open later and all year round. This offers secure employment for local people and brings additional money into the local economy.