

NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL: Preventing crime and promoting public safety through CCTV

Case Study

Project Overview

North Somerset Council took advantage of a government funding scheme and introduced CCTV to the district in 1996, at the time 16 cameras were installed to cover Weston super Mare Town Centre. Later, additional cameras were installed in the town and the system was extended to cover the towns of Nailsea, Clevedon and Portishead.

Product and Services Applications

- // End to end system implementation
- // Upgrade of the CCTV system
- // Fibre optic cabling
- // Control Room upgrade
- // Digital recording

Customer Needs

In the 1990's the Home Office made available over £200 million for CCTV town centre schemes through a Home Office funded CCTV Challenge and the subsequent 'Crime Reduction' programmes, the result, that over 1,200 CCTV schemes were installed in town centres and other public spaces throughout the United Kingdom.

Since the end of the crime education programme and dedicated central funding regime for public space CCTV, town centres have resorted to a myriad of general crime reduction funding streams to upgrade their CCTV system in order to keep up with technical developments in the industry, but also to remain consistent with the requirements of the police and the criminal justice system.

In 2005 North Somerset council took the decision to upgrade its CCTV system from analogue to digital recording and more recently have looked to Tyco to complete this work. The objectives being to further assist the police service and those agencies with responsibility for public safety with significant opportunities to deter offenders, identify crime in progress, monitor the activities of suspects and provide evidence to support the prosecution process. CCTV coverage not only assists police officers in the identification of offenders but also helps to establish the nature, location and time of the crime.



Tyco Solution

Over the last few years, North Somerset Council has worked with Tyco to upgrade the entire CCTV system to become fully digital and more capable of assisting the police with crime investigations and bringing offenders to justice.

Few CCTV installations cause a sharp intake of breath when first seen. However this is exactly the reaction when Weston –super-Mare's hugely impressive CCTV control room is viewed. Covering the district of North Somerset, the control room is dominated by the video wall consisting of TFT monitors surrounding a 42" plasma screen. The decision to modernise the control room itself was taken in 2007 as part of the complete upgrade of the system to digital technology. With clever use of space and technology North Somerset Council have expanded the control room without the upheaval and high cost of having to relocate.

The original monitor wall was made up of 17" CRT monitors and 15" screens made up the review desk. The new innovative design has allowed more monitors to be used, but the greatest advantage is that instead of just one review desk, a second one now sits on a raised platform behind the main one, creating a third operating position when required. The new control room is linked to 65 cameras mostly by fibre optic cabling.

In addition to the 6 monitors at each of the 2 workstations which enable detailed handling of incidents, the 32 screen video wall is constantly being scanned by the operators to keep a broad view of what is occurring across the region.

Manned in shifts by a team of 8 full time and 3 part time viewing operators, 24 hours a day 365 days a year, potential area of concern are continually panned and zoomed to ensure a water tight surveillance umbrella is maintained within the district.

Chris Harrison, CCTV Manager at North Somerset Council comments: "Upgrading the CCTV system in place at North Somerset has proven invaluable in helping to deter and detect crime and the effects are clear from the falling statistics. Not only did crime fall by 17% during the year that the new control room was commissioned, but we are proud to be able to state that 1 out of 7 events recorded by CCTV currently ends in arrest".

"Tyco worked with us to identify our needs and objective and the upgraded control room is evidence of this. From system design through to supply, installation and commissioning, they showed great skill, precision and expertise. We are delighted with the upgrade which brings the Council's CCTV monitoring facilities in line with our contemporaries. In many CCTV control rooms throughout the UK, the components of original base systems are yet to be replaced and are now approaching 10 years old. In fact, studies showed only 25% of Town Centre CCTV Schemes have so far made the transition from analogue to digital recording.

High quality images are essential in a CCTV system that is to be used for crime prevention. To obtain images of the clarity required by the Police in investigating crimes and achieving successful prosecutions from CCTV evidence, high specification cameras and verifiable recording equipment were needed. For 24 hour camera operation that means not just high resolution and day/night operation, but also infra red switching, integration functionality to build up pictures in poor light and peak white inversion for back lit images. The Geutebruck digital recording equipment allows operators to capture high quality images and provide extensive advantages over analogue recording.

With digital CCTV technology there is no need to replay hours of tape to identify an incident. CCTV footage can be searched by simply entering a date and time or applying a mouse pointer to a timeline on a monitor screen. If the incident time is not known a search can be made quickly by marking an area on the images and asking the system to find activity in that area, very quickly a list of events will be offered for review. During these operations, normal recording continues uninterrupted.

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All Installation and Maintenance work was carried out by ADT Fire and Security, A Tyco Business