



Plymouth says it clearly with Bosch

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Plymouth City Centre has upped its 'Respect' agenda by combining the best CCTV with loudspeakers from Bosch Security Systems to quite literally speak to would-be lawbreakers and discourage anti-social behaviour, sometimes before it even happens.

'Talking' cameras have so far been installed in four areas of the City and are having an immediate effect, according to Mike Atherton, Community Safety Manager for Plymouth City Centre Company. The PCCC bid for Home Office funding for the project with the local Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Unit, installing the Bosch speakers alongside fully functional PTZ cameras using the existing fibre infrastructure. Bosch's Horn loudspeakers were chosen for their reliability and ruggedness, even in difficult environments, and because of their excellent speech reproduction qualities.

The speakers allow control room operators to challenge anti-social behaviour at the time they see it. As well as being able to tackle littering, they will also be able to discourage loitering, reunite lost children with parents, and reassure people in times of crisis, for example if the emergency services are on their way or if someone is in need of medical attention.

As Mike explains: "Plymouth's crime statistics are excellent, but we're always looking for new and innovative ways of keeping the city clean and safe. The city centre attracts many visitors from across the region and we want to sustain this. We have four talking cameras located in the prime retail area and city centre car park. They enhance and aid the work of our community support officers and the CCTV system that we already have – whilst the cameras record goings on in the city centre, the loudspeakers actually allow us to prevent and deter irresponsible, anti-social and lawbreaking behaviour before it happens.

"We have the power to actively remind people that they are being watched. So if, for example, an operator sees someone throwing a piece of rubbish on the floor they will instruct them to pick it up which shames the person into picking it up and disposing of it properly."

The loudspeaker system was specified via the Fire & Security division of Western Electrical based in Plymouth. Western Electrical is the largest independent electrical wholesaler in the South West, with a network of eight branches and the Fire & Security division specialises in fire alarm systems, access control, CCTV.

Plymouth city centre's camera network is monitored at the central control room and the speaker system uses Bosch Praesideo as the front-end controller. This well proven, fully digital public address and emergency sound system is characterised by the flexibility in the system configuration, simplicity of installation and high-quality audio reproduction. It is logical for end-users and requires very little explanation to competently use Praesideo – even the biggest systems are easy to operate via a PC or touch screen using the system's open interface. The system also offers a low cost of ownership thanks to its dual functionality, expandability, modular architecture and programmable flexibility, additionally it is highly reliable to guarantee lower maintenance costs.

“The Praesideo system allows us to store about 1000 pre-recorded messages,” explains Mike, “and although we do have pre-recorded messages to say that CCTV is in operation, if an incident occurs we find it much more beneficial to make a live broadcast and mention something that they are wearing in order to really hammer home that we can see exactly what they are doing.

“It is an excellent system and adds to our arsenal but we are fortunate that we don't have to use it excessively. We might only use it twice a week, but the times that it is used we see 100 per cent effectiveness and it has real impact in managing the situation. We've had a positive response from the general public who are happy that littering is being addressed but we aim to maintain a balance and only use them when they are required. Whilst there are no definitive plans to extend the network, the loudspeakers are proving invaluable in the primary retail area and this demonstrates the benefits should we identify additional areas.”

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