

CCTV takes to the Road in Restormel, Cornwall

So much is written about the ubiquitous nature of CCTV, it is easy to forget that it is neither practical nor affordable in every situation where it could prove highly effective. A unique project in Cornwall illustrates that there is an alternative to permanently fixed CCTV.



Restormel

Restormel Borough Council covers the heart of mid-Cornwall from the surf boarding paradise of Newquay on the North West Coast to Fowey, St Austell Bay to the romantic fishing village of Mevagissey on the South and the incredibly popular Eden project.

Strategy

Under the auspices of the Government's Crime Reduction Programme (www.crimereduction.gov.org), the Restormel Community Safety Partnership (RCSP) was formed in 1999. Bringing together representatives from the local councils, the police, probation, health and housing, the Partnership sets out 'to reduce the impact and fear of crime and disorder, in order to improve the quality of life for all people who live in, work in and visit Restormel'. Designing, implementing and managing Restormel's community CCTV schemes is an important aspect of the Partnership's work.

The cost of extending CCTV to cover small rural areas, seasonally active locations (such as beaches and coastline car parks) and one-off public events is prohibitive.

As an alternative, the Partnership developed a scheme for an overt, rapid response mobile CCTV vehicle for swift deployment to areas of tension or known criminal activity. A £70,000 bid for Home Office funding was successfully made under round one of the Government's Crime Reduction Programme and the project was finally commissioned in 2001.

Unique Design

The original idea for the scheme drew on the experience of JFS Security Systems Limited, a specialist security firm based in Exeter that provides CCTV and Access Control systems throughout the UK and offers a popular trade counter service to local firms. Managing Director, John Fricker, explains:

“I’d noticed the increasing use in the security industry of vehicles as mobile demonstration units and thought it would be reasonably straightforward to adapt the concept to provide a mobile CCTV unit. We’ve since watched the idea grow and there is now steady demand for covert and overt CCTV vehicles throughout the country.”



The vehicle in question is a Volkswagen LT35 with a medium wheel base and high roof. This was purchased by the RCSP and adapted and fitted with a range of surveillance and recording equipment by JFS Security Systems.

Cameras

The vehicle’s cameras consist of two Pelco Esprit® pan, tilt and zoom, high resolution colour cameras (ES31 series) mounted on pneumatic masts that rise from the roof of the vehicle to a maximum height of six metres. These high-speed cameras feature 0.05 lux, 22x optical zoom, 176x digital zoom, auto-focus, auto-iris, and a continuous 360-degree pan facility. Four externally mounted close surveillance discreet cameras are mounted within the bodywork of the vehicle so that the operator can view people approaching or in close proximity to the vehicle itself. These cameras utilise the motion detection feature of the Digital Video Recorder (DVR) to call up images instantly onto a monitor whenever movement is detected around the vehicle. In addition there is a standalone camera on board that can be deployed remotely, usually fitted to street furniture for additional coverage. A radio receiver connects the remote camera to the matrix and hard disk recorder on the vehicle.

Monitoring & Recording

The interior of the Volkswagen is fitted out in a similar way to an ordinary monitoring station with a bank of three colour Vista Monitors (two PVD1400DG and one PVD1000DG), two Sanyo VHS Video Cassette Recorders (TLS-9024P) and one Digital Sprite Lite DVR from Dedicated Micros (16-way, with a 320GB hard disk), all supplied by Norbain SD.

The three high resolution, colour Vista Monitors, each of which offers 750 TVL resolution, cover one roof mounted camera each with one dedicated to the four discreet armoured cameras that are mounted in the vehicle's bodywork, one on each face.



The Digital Sprite DVR provides a recording and playback quality that is higher than S-VHS and offers a very fast search facility of stored images. At 320GB, the DVR's hard disk is large enough for the vehicle operator to enjoy the convenience of real-time recording with incidents logged manually as they occur.

The two Sanyo VCRs are used to 'spot record' incidents direct from the DVR onto tape for evidential use in court. A Pelco matrix (CM6700) and Pelco joystick controller (KBD300) complete the equipment with the joystick providing telemetry control for the two roof mounted PTZ cameras.

Deterring Crime

PC Bob Hoare, Crime Prevention Officer for Restormel is responsible for the vehicle's operations:

"The strength of the vehicle is that there are few locations even in Cornwall where it can't go and so it is extremely versatile and flexible. We use it frequently for public events and, of course, it's particularly useful during the holiday season when we can monitor the beaches and car parks. Once in position the cameras can be active within two minutes."

The vehicle is designed to be as overt as possible with the primary focus on crime prevention and deterrence. The signage on the vehicle complies with the Data Protection Act and makes it very clear that CCTV surveillance is in operation.

“Although the focus is on crime prevention,” says Bob Hoare, “the unit is highly effective at responding to specific incidents, capturing criminal and anti-social behaviour on camera that leads directly to arrests and prosecutions. I think we can claim that the unit achieves its objective of identifying crime and providing the public with the reassurance they deserve. That’s to the merit of everyone involved in the project from its design to its operation. Ultimately, it’s the quality of images that we capture that delivers the result and that’s a direct reflection of the very high standard of equipment we have on board.”

Installer Profile

JFS Security Systems Limited

www.jfs-security.com

Specialist suppliers of CCTV and access control (including biometrics) equipment, JFS Security Systems Ltd provides a national service from the company base in Exeter. Every system is tailor-made to specific needs, working through the design and specification stages to system installation and maintenance. Projects range from the most basic of single camera applications to sophisticated multi-site installations.