

Y-cam improves monitoring for the Border Collie Trust

Rescue & re-homing centre improves care, services and finances

Organisation

Border Collie Trust

Location

Staffordshire, UK

Application

Premises security,
Un-manned reception
monitoring,
Remote monitoring

Y-cam Partner

NW Systems Group



The Border Collie Trust provides care, rescue and rehoming of Border Collies & Collie Crosses from across the UK

Requirements ■■■

After trialling camera security systems to provide un-manned reception coverage and alerting, as well as security of premises and animal monitoring, the required performance of picture quality and wireless range remained elusive.

Border Collie Trust responded to an offer from the Charitable Technology Exchange to provide a solution to meet the needs of the business.



Y-cam Black YCB002 wall-mounted within kennel complex

Solution ■■■

As an installation partner, NW Systems Group facilitated an on-site survey and consultation on the requirements of the system. NW Systems Group provided an all-new Y-cam IP camera surveillance solution, which utilised the existing IT infrastructure of the Trust.

Four new Y-cam Black nightvision cameras were installed, with a central monitoring facility installed on an existing PC platform using Y-cam MultiLive software.

Cameras were wall-mounted, with one camera placed covering the reception area, another monitoring the rescue kennels, an additional camera in the problem kennels, and the last in the boarding kennels. Configuration of the existing wireless facilities, and setup of remote monitoring devices completed the installation.

Outcome ■■■

The Border Collie Trust now has an advanced, high-quality surveillance system that has met and exceeded their performance requirements.

As a further benefit beyond expectations, the new system has enabled greater flexibility and efficiency for the Trust's operation, allowing workers to monitor animals remotely from a centralised place, and also creating an improved environment for their canine guests by reducing disturbances.

As the icing on the cake, the Border Collie Trust have added an additional revenue stream and a unique selling point to their business - by creating a chargeable service to allow owners to view their 'boarding' pets whilst they're on holiday.

"It lets us see how they are behaving naturally. It helps that the night-time picture quality is very good as well."

Ben Wilkes, Charity Trustee



Single display of four cameras from the central monitoring system using Y-cam MultiLive software.

Situated in the heart of Staffordshire, purpose built kennels are the base and rescue centre for the work the Trust undertakes throughout the UK in the care, rescue and re-homing of Border Collies & Collie Crosses. The addition of a boarding block provides guest accommodation services for the more fortunate and well-off Collies, with profits returning to Charity. When the Border Collie Trust was given the opportunity to install Y-cam's wireless internet cameras, the charity jumped at the chance. With kennels, offices and a shop based across a rural four and a half-acre site, the Trust knew that the cameras would improve security. But that was just the beginning...

...reaching into his jacket and passing me over his iPhone. The small screen shows live footage from another camera – this time from one of the kennels. Again, it is sharp and detailed – & demonstrates how the Trust is starting to use the cameras as more than just a security aid...

"I'd thought of them before, for the security issue," says Ben Wilkes, a Trustee of the charity who runs the office and IT side of the operation. "But I also knew that we could do so much more." A genial ex-policeman, Ben waived the chance of a second career in order to volunteer full-time for the Trust – a rescuing and re-homing charity based in the heart of Staffordshire.

With a natural aptitude for IT and systems, Ben has helped to introduce big technological improvements into the charity, to increase its professional outlook and to help manage the workload of the small office. It's clearly working - the charity's online shop has expanded, seeing its income rising by 25-30% in the teeth of the recession - and the dogs' details and histories are now tracked on a database, replacing the previous hand-written files.

High Quality Needs

Naturally, given Ben's background, it is not surprising that he had mooted installing cameras before. But his initial experiment with wireless equipment wasn't a great success. "The picture quality was rubbish!" he laughs. "It was just about okay if you were standing right next to the wireless point, but it deteriorated as soon as you moved away. It had no range at all". The contrast with the Y-cam units couldn't be greater as Ben demonstrates, hitting a few keys on his PC. Each quarter of the screen

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This is run as a trading arm, with the profits going back to the charity.

There's a camera in there now, and the plan is to charge a small additional fee to allow owners to be able to see their dogs whilst they are away,"

comes to life with vivid moving images of the premises, supplied from the four cameras installed. "It's brilliant quality," says Ben, as he expands one shot to fill the screen, enabling us to look across the whole of the charity's shop - including merchandise and a browsing customer. If what we're watching is impressive, sometimes, according to Ben, given the right internet conditions it's "just like you're watching a film".

We discuss the frame refresh rate, which is immensely quicker than we've come to expect from the bog-standard 'security camera'.

Remote Monitoring

"Now have a look at this," he offers, reaching into his jacket and passing me over his iPhone. The small screen shows live footage from another camera – this time from one of the kennels. Again, it is sharp and detailed – and demonstrates how the Trust is starting to use the cameras as more than just a security aid. "Here, we've got a dog with two-week-old pups," Ben explains, "by putting a camera in with them, we can keep an eye on them in the evenings. We also have dogs here that find it difficult to cope with the kennel environment, or who are old or ill".

"We are now able to monitor these at all times – but without disturbing them. It lets us see how they are behaving naturally. It helps that the night-time picture quality is very good as well."

Additional Revenue Streams ■■■

“We also have a boarding kennel, for owners who go away on holiday. This is run as a trading arm, with the profits going back to the charity. There’s a camera in there now, and the plan is to charge a small additional fee to allow owners to be able to see their dogs whilst they are away,” he continues.

It transpires that no other kennels in the region can offer this facility (to Ben’s knowledge) although he does recall reading of a ‘dog hotel’ in the North of England that provides this sort of thing, alongside myriad other luxuries such as piped music for the dogs. But a serious point is made – some people do want to be able to watch their pet from a beach overseas, and therefore there is an according commercial opportunity. “It might seem a bit strange to some,” Ben comments, “But when we’ve used technology to help people keep in touch with us, it’s been very popular. We have over two thousand people following us on Facebook, for instance. People ARE interested.”

Exceeding Expectations ■■■

The animals rescued by the Border Collie Trust are often the lucky ones – the charity receives ten to fifteen calls a day; Ben explains that they could have twice as many rescue kennels available, and still fill them.

The Trust is grateful for the help from both Y-cam and the Charity Technology Exchange, which facilitated the donation. “For small charities - the biggest percentage of charities - there’s very little help out there,” reflects Ben.

We stand looking at the pups that we had recently seen on Ben’s iPhone, the camera keeping a paternal watch over them.

“Y-cam exceeded my expectations because you never know,” says Ben. “My biggest concern was quality. But with this quality, you can see exactly what’s going on. You see... mum’s in there, looking after them.”

Easy and Unobtrusive ■■■

We talk about the installation process, which was carried out by NW Systems Group. How simple is it to maintain and manage. I ask? “Once it’s up, it’s easy,” says Ben.

“Once, I couldn’t get in to the reception camera, but I rebooted the router and it was fine. All our trustees have access to the pictures, and they aren’t necessarily computer-literate people. One is in her seventies, and in fact this was the driver for her to get a computer – so she could see the dogs!”

Walking around the site, we take a peek at the cameras in situ. The kennels are clean, spacious and light, and each camera sits unobtrusively mounted on the wall – you’d miss them if you weren’t looking for them. “Do you remember what CCTV cameras used to be like?” laughs Ben as we regard the small black squares looking down upon the dogs.



Equipment List



Cameras

4 x Y-cam Black YCB002 indoor nightvision cameras

Monitoring/Recording Systems

Y-cam MultiLive NVR software

Existing hardware utilised

Existing Office PC & Laptops
Apple iPhone

Install Partner



NW Systems Group is a specialist in the area of IP Video and Security offering supply, design, installation, integration, commissioning, training, ongoing support & maintenance.

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Facilitating Partner



Charity Technology Exchange (CTX) distributes donated technology and software to deserving causes throughout the UK.

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