

redcare

case study: public space solutions for the media



The Requirement

The Big Screen Project is a unique initiative in public space broadcasting. It is a network of outdoor cinema-size video screens, located in major city centres around the UK, showing local and national news, events and information 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The project is a collaborative partnership between the BBC, various local authorities and a number of sponsors including The Royal Bank of Scotland. The screen technology is provided by Philips with content being transmitted from nearby BBC centres to the screens using BT redcare transmission systems.

The pilot scheme was established in Manchester city centre two years ago, and there are now three others in Liverpool, Birmingham and Hull.

The objective was to develop a

series of nationwide points of focus and to build a sense of 'occasion' for landmark events. For some sites the screen location was chosen to revitalise an under-utilised inner-city location. In Hull, for example, The Big Screen has transformed a crossing place between two shopping centres into an event space.

"The Big Screen Project allows us to reach out into the communities that the screens serve to provide a showcase for local media content," explains William Jenkyns, Technical Director of the Big Screen Project. "We run film features and a mix of both BBC and locally-generated content and we also use the screen sites as an 'inject' point for sending local content to the wider BBC network.

"As far as we know it is first public area broadcasting system of its type anywhere in the world," he adds.

The Solution

The Big Screens are 8 metres wide by 5 metres high – and feature a 320 x 208 pixel digital LED screen. LED screen technology was chosen because of its suitability for outdoor application.

For data transmission, each screen control room has a built-in, permanent and dedicated two-way BT redcare rs1000 fibre optic cable connection path to the nearest local BBC centre from the screen*.

The Manchester screen – the pilot

scheme – is driven from the local BBC control room, with all the screen content being sent from there to the screen, in real time, via the BT redcare link.

For the subsequent screens in the programme, the screen control and play-out system, rather than being at the nearest BBC site, is actually at the screen site. That allows local control of the screen, and it means that some content can be easily broadcast to the screen locally from DVD, Mini-DV or DVCAM. For these

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BT redcare's transmission technology is at the heart of The Big Screen Project – the world's first 24/7 'big screen' public space broadcasting service

screens, the redcare rs1000 link is used for sending one-off images to the screen and for receiving reports back to the BBC control centre from the screen site.

“Using the rs1000 link, content is regularly fed back from all the screens for wider broadcast, which helps to build public awareness both of the screens and the project,” explains Jenkyns.

“Reporters can be filmed in front of the screen and the link means they don’t need a satellite kit to upload their reports. We have a box at the foot of the screen they can simply plug a camera into, and then use the permanent rs1000 fibre link for transmitting their reports back to the local BBC centre. The screen sites are often used as an inject point for bulletins for the BBC 6.30pm evening news

programme – with a live feed from the site being fed down the rs1000 to the TV gallery. With simultaneous data transmission in both directions, via the BT redcare link, we can also feed graphics out to the screen to provide a visual backdrop to the report being filmed,” he adds.

* Except the Hull site.

The Results

Since their establishment, the Big Screens have proven themselves to be a highly popular and unique resource. They have been used to broadcast national sporting events including The Grand National and Wimbledon. The screens were used during the Live8 event both to broadcast the concert live to audiences gathered at each of the Big Screen sites and, at the same time, to send back images of the audi-

ences at the sites to the BBC centre, for broadcast as part of the wider Live8 coverage itself.

The Screens are also being used for an increasing range of events, unrelated to any BBC coverage. They have been used in partnership with Arts Council England to broadcast video art and short film content. And earlier this year they were used by the Royal Opera House to

broadcast live images of its ballet and opera performances from London’s Covent Garden to audiences gathered – with their picnic hampers and deckchairs – at the Big Screen sites.

Following these successes, the Big Screen Project network is now being expanded, with the next two new sites now being established at Wrexham and Leeds.

Why BT redcare

William Jenkyns, Technical Director, The Big Screen Project, shares his experience of using the BT redcare transmission technology:

“For the relatively short distance fixed link from the screen to the nearest BBC Centre, the link is the only such product available. It gives us sufficient bandwidth for what we need.

“The link considerably enhances what we can do with the screens. We’d be struggling to bring the wider world to the screen and vice versa without it. It’s a useful piece of equipment that gets used a great deal.

“The rs1000 is simple to use. To date we are happy with the quality and resilience of the BT redcare link. For the Manchester screen, the circuit is constantly in use, because – in the absence of any control and play-out facility at the screen site it is needed to feed all the content from the BBC control centre to the screen – and that has been in constant use since 2003.

The BT redcare rs1000/rs1000d data transmission technology offers:

- ‘always on’ point to point digital data communications link
- highly resilient and extremely secure fibre optic cable transmission path

- environmentally very robust technology
- large data volume throughput capacity – 100Mbps (100base-T) bandwidth
- flexible deployment with both point-to-point and point-to-multipoint connection options

To find out how BT redcare’s transmission technology could help your business, visit us at www.redcare.bt.com/vision or telephone 0800 800 828