

## UPGRADED WIDE AREA NETWORK CULTIVATES GROWTH OF UPTIME

*Land-based Further Education college benefits from updated WAN infrastructure.*

### **P&C COMMUNICATIONS provide a solution to refresh the Wide Area Network (WAN) infrastructure of Askham Bryan College.**

Askham Bryan College, affiliate of the University of Leeds, specialises in providing courses designed to develop vocational skills relevant to land-based and associated industries. The main college campus is located four miles outside of York, surrounded by its agricultural estate. The college also has four other out-centres at Bedale, Harrogate, Pickering and Guisborough.



These remote sites were linked by an ISDN connections, but high running costs from the associated call charges and the downtime that was experienced when faults occurred on the connections were causing concern to the College.

Mike Taylor, IT Manager at Askham Bryan College recalls the situation: *"ISDN was fine when it worked, however if there was a problem the buck was passed between the two previous suppliers each blaming the other, this resulted in service loss for days at a time."*

Askham Bryan College began looking into alternative wide area network (WAN) solutions which would refresh the network and reduce annual running costs and P&C Communications were invited to put forward a solution.

**"100% system availability has improved user experience."**

- Mike Taylor,  
IT Manager, Askham Bryan College

Paul S Cochrane, Account Manager at P&C Communications, explains: *"One of our key objectives was to reduce the annual running costs. The solution for Askham Bryan College was made slightly more challenging by the rural location of the college and it's remote sites. The lack of availability of ADSL services in the area mean that unfortunately deploying a point-to-point VPN wasn't a viable option."*

Instead P&C Communications used 64kbps leased lines which provided an equal level of the performance to the ISDN Solution. Leased Lines have the advantage of having a fixed annual rental cost and do not incur any additional call charges. This means that the communications costs are predictable and easier to accurately budget.

Paul continues, *"The aim was to save money for the College, so we wanted to avoid a situation where existing equipment and infrastructure was being left unused when there were opportunities for us to make the most out of it."*



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The existing ISDN lines are used as a backup system to provide redundancy on the network. Should a fault occur with the primary serial connection the network has been configured so that the ISDN will automatically be used to take over the connection until the fault has been cleared on the leased line. This drastically reduces downtime compared to the previously topology where a fault on the connection meant a total loss of connectivity.



The automated back-up system is invaluable after office hours. Askham Bryan College run a number of evening courses and the staff and students involved need full access to network resources. Should one of the connections fail over night, the automated backup allows the site to retain connectivity using the ISDN. Since the College does not employ overnight IT support staff, the backup facility minimises the need to call staff out of hours to attempt to resolve faults.



Routing and redundancy of the solution is provided by Cisco Systems technology. Even though Cisco produce routers capable of handling both connections from one chassis, P&C Communications instead implemented two entry level routers at each of the remote sites, linked together with Ethernet.

Paul explains, *"The College had already routers in place for their ISDN connections. By recycling the branch routers and putting in another identical router to handle the serial connections we reduced the capital cost and provided a further level of resiliency to the network. Should one of the branch routers fail – for example a PSU failure - the other router will take over and ensure connectivity is maintained until the faulty router can be replaced or repaired. We cover the Cisco routers with a maintenance agreement with an engineer on-site response within four hours during working hours guaranteed by our Service Level Agreement. "*

**"Support has been all one could hope for."**

- Mike Taylor,  
IT Manager, Askham Bryan College

Askham Bryan College began to see immediate return on investment with reduction in annual running costs for the network. Since its installation the college has been very happy with the performance of the solution. Mike Taylor concludes *" 100% system availability has improved the user experience, support has been all one could hope for. P&C take ownership of the problem and deal with it."*

### **About P&C Communications**



**P&C Communications Ltd** are network systems integrators specialising in delivering highly secure local and wide area voice and data communications infrastructures for a variety of requirements including provision of point-to-point and multi-site wide area networks, Virtual Private Networking (VPN), mobile and remote access, Voice over IP (VoIP), structured cabling and wireless networks.

We operate on a solution based customer-focused approach backed by a highly skilled team able to provide a total solution for our customers covering all areas of the infrastructure's life cycle – from initial LAN & WAN design and project management to configuration and installation of the service to providing ongoing support and maintenance for our networking solutions.

Our range of services also include consultancy (including independent fault finding and troubleshooting), ongoing management and monitoring of LAN and WAN connections and specialised training services.