

Stockport Town Hall



Stockport's splendid Town Hall - nicknamed 'The Wedding Cake' - is an understandably popular venue for events. Some 120,000 visitors a year attend weddings, meetings and exhibitions in what is also Stockport Council's head office. The council needed an effective and straightforward access control system for keeping visitors within the appropriate areas whilst maintaining easy access for staff.

"We wanted a new system as we were getting a lot of problems in terms of theft," explains Jason Carroll, who is the venues manager responsible for Stockport Town Hall. The solution has been to fit Net2, a networked access control system from Paxton Access to 10 primary doors.

Staff members gain access by simply presenting their key-fob tokens to readers at the doors. Access levels are set for each user, governing which areas they can enter, and at which times of the day. Use of Net2 has also provided the flexibility to introduce special features using its latest 'triggers and actions' capabilities. Bespoke aspects of the installation include the provision of single-use entry cards for visitors; the ability to lock or unlock the doors from an alternative control panel that requires no computer expertise; and protection for the integrated fire alarm in case of damage to the network cabling.

"The system has been excellent and we will be expanding its use next year"

The Paxton Access equipment was recommended by installer ACC Security Solutions, a company which has worked for the council for several years. A demonstration convinced Jason that it was what he needed. "The system has been excellent and we will be expanding its use next year," he says. Security was an issue with 89,000 people a year coming to ballroom functions and 41,000 attending meetings in the century-old building. Councillors and staff also need access to meeting rooms and offices.

Particular attention has been paid to devising an efficient way of letting visitors in while controlling access from reception. "We developed a system that gives visitors a proximity device to get in - but that they won't take away with them," explains ACC Security Solutions proprietor Simon Farmer. Visitors reporting to reception are given a card. A motorised capture reader then reads the card, unlocks the door and drops the card into a safe. This is emptied daily so that the captured cards can be reused. The system saves reception staff having to escort a constant stream of people the 40m or so across the large entrance hall and avoids the security issues of giving out codes.



"I like the versatility of the system," says security operations manager Steve Brokenbrow. The doors read the fobs both on entering and leaving an area. "With the software, we can see who is going in or out. It is especially useful during peak periods."

Jason welcomes the ease with which people can be added as users

Not all staff members are based at the town hall and Jason welcomes the ease with which people can be added as users. It can also be useful to know where people have been and when. Paxton Access' standalone Compact system was already in use at the Town Hall and remains operational on some doors, which will in time be upgraded to Net2. The same fobs are used throughout, so the user sees no difference. The same Net2 system will also be used in other buildings, starting with the council's Grade I listed mansion house Bramhall Hall.

One of the key features of Town Hall's system is that it can be set to lock or unlock the doors without the user needing access to the computer at the heart of the network. "We needed something that was easy to administer. We have a lot of function staff and manual staff who are not computer literate," says Jason.

ACC Security Solutions therefore devised a solution that provides a simple control panel as an alternative to the computer for locking, unlocking and checking the status of the doors. Each of the 10 key-operated switches has its own status light, so that the operator can tell at a glance whether, for instance, the ballroom is unlocked. "They can just use the keyfob and set the doors to locked," says Simon. "It bridges the technology gap. "Administrative functions such as adding users and setting access rights are carried out on the central computer

The control board also makes it easy to check that all of the doors have unlocked automatically in the event of fire. Signals for the fire alarm are carried round the building via the network cable. "The worry was that the fire alarm signal would fail if the cable became damaged or faulty," adds Simon. ACC Security Solutions therefore developed a method for checking the integrity of the fire alarms. "Should a network fault be detected, a blue light would flash behind reception and we would be sent an email from the Net2 system to bring the fault to our attention," he explains. "It is not a standard feature but we were able to achieve it thanks to the new 'triggers and actions' that Paxton Access has released recently." This enables third-party equipment to be integrated into the Net2 network using I/O boards and allows the installer to tweak the system to achieve the bespoke requirements. "It's very easy – you follow a wizard on the screen and answer simple questions. By the time you've finished it's all set up and working."

"I couldn't ask for more"

One of the reasons why ACC Security Solutions uses Paxton Access is that the range "covers nearly every eventuality that you may come across" adds Simon. The equipment is reliable and includes very good diagnostics in case of any problems. "It is a very good company to deal with." Jason has also been impressed with Paxton Access' support, in particular the speed with which ACC was able to get the answers to his enquiries. "I asked for things that even Paxton Access had never had requested before," he says. He has also been very pleased with ACC's service. "I couldn't ask for more," he says. "I'm well known as somebody who expects 250% - but Simon's company achieves it."

System user:	Stockport Town Hall - Stockport
Installer:	ACC Security Solutions - Stockport
Type of site	Municipal building with offices & function rooms
Type of system	Net2 PC based system
System description	10 doors



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