

High praise for Axis as former chapel is secured and conservation begins.

Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings deploys innovative network camera technology in project to repair medieval building as a home.



Organization:

Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings

Location:

Maidstone, Kent, UK

Application:

Safety and security, intruder protection

Mission

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) is a UK charity dedicated to protecting and repairing historic buildings. In recent years its main roles have been advice, training and campaigning. However, it recently purchased former St Andrew's Chapel near Maidstone, Kent, which was to be its first new repair project in almost 50 years. With the aim of breathing life back into the circa C15 structure, the renovation will also offer an opportunity to teach others the practical skills required to care for such a building. As the charity is based in London, it required a network camera solution to monitor the site remotely for intruders and to act as a deterrent against theft of materials.

Solution

To ensure the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings could carry out its work seamlessly, Axis Communications, the market leader in network video technology, donated network surveillance cameras from its AXIS Companion range to monitor the outside and main entrance of the former chapel.

The system comprised: four AXIS Companion Bullet LE cameras, delivering HD video quality with built-in IR illumination for effective surveillance in darkness; one AXIS Companion Cube camera with a built-in microphone and mini-speaker to effectively deter intruders; and an AXIS Companion Recorder, providing a wireless access point for mobile devices.

Result

The deployment of the network surveillance solution has reduced the need to have a security resource on site to protect the premises, saving both time and money. The system has already successfully identified intruders entering the grounds of the building but causing no damage. Additionally, the cameras have been useful in detecting local wildlife to advise the Kent Wildlife Trust of what animals call the surrounding area home, including many foxes that have been spotted around the location.

Images courtesy of Ralph Hodgson

“The image quality of the cameras is fantastic, especially at night when it is, of course, usually more difficult to identify potential threats.”

Matthew Slocombe, Director of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

Protecting ancient buildings

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings believes old and historic buildings should have a future. From cottages and castles to churches and cathedrals, its mission is to breathe life back into old and neglected buildings and, most importantly, teach the wider community how to effectively care for and maintain historical sites.

Founded in 1877 by designer and conservationist William Morris, after he and fellow architects became concerned about the damage to and losses of culturally important buildings, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings has been an advisory, training and campaigning body in recent years. But after 50 years it has now decided to find a new building of its own to repair, using the project as an opportunity to provide a practical demonstration to others of how they can do the same.

Matthew Slocombe, Director of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, said, “The former St Andrew’s Chapel was chosen because it retains much historic character and interest, and because it’s a modestly-sized house to which many old building owners can relate. We felt there was much value in conserving the building, but in doing it over an extended five-year period will allow us to train and assist others via practical work, video and photo demonstrations. At the end, the building will be sold to a new owner to use as a home.

“Every aspect of the building needs work, so we can demonstrate how to tackle common problems during the restoration. Through this people learn about traditional craft skills via videos and photos, partly generated from the newly installed network security system that will document the changes over the years.”

Ensuring site safety

One of the main challenges of the installation was that there wasn’t a main broadband line or power line, so the

first step was to prepare the building for the installation to take place. AXIS Companion Recorder could then be installed, delivering wireless access for mobile devices to remotely view footage in real-time in case of intrusion.

David Needham, UK & Ireland Sales Manager at Axis Communications, said, “Since the installation, the cameras have identified young adults entering the building’s grounds, but not harming the property. It’s also seen local residents stopping and challenging people looking to enter unlawfully. This has meant there is no need to deploy security personnel to secure the site, saving the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings time and money.”

Matthew Slocombe said, “The image quality of the cameras is fantastic, especially at night when it is, of course, usually more difficult to identify potential threats. The built-in IR illumination has made intrusions unmistakable, and we’ve all been glued to the screens watching the wildlife in the area and providing updates to the Kent Wildlife Trust.”

Contributing to a smarter, safer world

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings aims to improve our world by repairing culturally and historically significant buildings. Because this drive to create a better world is in line with Axis’ ethos of innovating for a smarter, safer world and doing good in the community, the cameras were donated for the purposes of securing the premises during the conservation works.

David Needham said, “We felt we wanted to get involved with this project as we recognised an organisation that was trying to help others and do good in the community, which is core to our values as a business. We look forward to seeing the project progress and are thrilled to have played a role in securing the site so restoration work can take place.”



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