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Case Study

Project Location: Teifi Marshes Nature Reserve & Welsh Wildlife Centre

Client: The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales

Date: October 2006

Project Description

The Teifi Marshes Nature Reserve and Welsh Wildlife Centre is located a few miles inland from Cardigan on the West coast of Wales. As part of an extensive upgrade of the interpretive facilities at the WWC the WTSWW wanted to make use of remote controlled cameras to open up previously inaccessible areas of the reserve to visitors and help increase awareness of the stunning wildlife in the area and the Herd of Water Buffalo that are used to manage the marsh.



Outersight surveyed the area and with the assistance of the WWC team short listed the best camera locations. We then designed a remote observation system that could be deployed in several phases as funding became available. The first phase consisted of; 2 cameras on a raft (one above water and one below), a remote controlled camera on a mast overlooking the Pentood Marsh and the viewing and control facilities in the 'Virtual Hide' at the WWC. The remaining phases consist of adding more remote controlled cameras in the marshes and up the river Teifi.



The main camera was installed on a mast which at 4.5 metres tall was in keeping with the height of the surrounding trees. The mast was also camouflaged to allow it to blend in with the surrounding area. The WWC team decided to erect a fence to keep the Water Buffalo from getting too close.

To avoid the need for wind turbines or solar panels at the camera sites we opted for grid connected low voltage power. We also chose to transmit the video and control signals over Fibreoptic cable as the terrain was not suitable for Microwave radio links and the video quality is better. To make best use of the available budget the WWC team and volunteers installed the Fibreoptic and Low Voltage Power cables between the camera locations and the 'Virtual Hide'. The cables were armoured so only required trenching through high traffic areas such as under footpaths and cattle ways, this made the installation process much less time consuming.

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The pond cameras were installed on a raft which can be moved around the pond without disturbing the pond bottom which would vastly reduce underwater visibility. 2 high quality submersible cameras were fitted to the raft one showing underwater view and one giving a 'ducks eye view' of the pond. Visitors can press a button beneath the viewing screen to select which camera to view.

A room previously used as an office is being turned into a 'Virtual Hide' with four 32" LCD screens around the walls showing either the live video feeds or pre-recorded highlights. Outersight supplied and installed the screens which the WWC will surround with interpretive graphic panels to complete the room prior to the centre reopening in March 2007. The 'Virtual Hide' will also host a live video link to the Island of Skomer which we will be installing in early 2007.



The camera is controlled by visitors using a touchscreen LCD display with a built in video window. One of the advantages with the touchscreen is that it can be customised and remotely updated to accommodate extra cameras in the future. There is also a camera control console fitted with a joystick for staff use, this allows more in depth control of camera settings.

All cameras can be recorded on to a Hard Disk recorder which allows easy editing of highlights which can then be burnt to DVD for playback. The capacity of the hard disk allows for 24hr recording at very high quality.

The live images will also be available to view on the internet as we have installed a webcam server capable of displaying still images or live video from upto 6 cameras.

This has been a very exciting project which will bring huge benefits to the WWC and the surrounding area in the years to come. We look forward to the official opening in the spring of 2007.

Contact:

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