

# CASE STUDY

## THE DONKEY SANCTUARY

**South West Communications Group provides The Donkey Sanctuary with a strategic long-term partnership for all their voice and data needs following the initial installation of a telephone**



The Donkey Sanctuary was founded by the late Dr Elisabeth Svendsen MBE and became a registered charity in 1969. The charity was left 204 donkeys from another struggling charity and so purchased Slade House Farm in Sidmouth, Devon, to house the growing number of donkeys. The Donkey Sanctuary has evolved and now supports projects to relieve the suffering of donkeys in 27 countries worldwide, including sanctuaries across Europe and major projects in Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Kenya and Mexico.

The charity had been a **swcomms** customer for 15 years following the installation of a 130-extension Alcatel 4400 PBX telephone solution in 1999 to replace the incumbent BT system. This installation marked the beginning of a **long-term relationship** which has evolved over the years as The Donkey Sanctuary has grown and developments have been made in communications.

Following the initial telephone system installation in 1999, we recommended several incremental upgrades to what is now an Alcatel-Lucent OmniPCX Enterprise solution to take advantage of the latest features and applications available without having to re-invest in a replacement system thus demonstrating the benefits and return on investment of this **shrewd initial investment**.

The Alcatel-Lucent OmniPCX Enterprise is a future-proof telephone system capable of supporting IP, digital and analogue extensions. It is easy to use and manage and was designed with multi-site businesses in mind.

**Alcatel·Lucent**   
Enterprise

Modern handsets and reception consoles ease handling of calls to their busy departments, such as its fundraising and veterinary teams. By using the charity's data network between their three sites in the Sidmouth area, all calls are free of charge and calls can be seamlessly transferred to any extension.

In addition, Alcatel-Lucent's Solution Premium Services software assurance scheme provides a complete protection package that ensures their solutions are running at peak efficiency and capacity. It provides essential software maintenance and proactive evolution to enable stability and delay obsolescence.

The latest upgrade also prepared The Donkey Sanctuary for their migration to SIP. These have replaced the ISDN telephone lines previously used by the charity and has succeeded in **cutting their call costs by 95%**; a real benefit to a charity.

Other benefits include number portability and improved service level agreements which can guarantee fixes in as little as four hours rather than 48 hours for ISDN lines. Our SIP service comes with inclusive minutes which have created the massive cost savings.

One of the key challenges was to also overcome the limited Internet access created by challenging terrain of the East Devon coast. Internet access for the charity's headquarters at Slade Farm, neighbouring farms and network of farms and support workers around the UK and Europe all needed to be addressed

Broadband connections have been provided for remote support workers and farms around the UK who need access to their central business systems. **swcomms** has provided **30+ broadband lines** to sites in Belfast, Birmingham, Ivybridge, Leeds and Manchester among others to enable them to securely connect to the charity's system via virtual private networks (VPNs).

High-speed internet access has been delivered to The Donkey Sanctuary. The charity had previously struggled with their broadband connection due to the topographical challenges of the remote farmland surrounding their headquarters. This challenge was overcome initially by connecting Slade Farm to our purpose-built data centre via a 4Mbps leased line.

As connectivity technology has improved, this has latterly been replaced by a 100Mbps internet leased line which gives the charity access to the internet, VPN links for all their farms and remote staff across the world and to **connect to their new fully hosted CRM solution** based in the USA.

We have also installed a point to point link between their headquarters and their workshop & engineering facility that had previously suffered from unworkable broadband. This mile-and-a-half 50Mbps link has successfully integrated this site by connecting them to the telephone system and the charity's servers. Regarded as a remote arm previously, the workshop & engineering facility is now very much an organic part of the organisation.

We will use another **point to point link** to help The Donkey Sanctuary expand their network to Brookfields Farm. Again, this will connect this site to the central phone system and servers.

Additional **wireless connectivity** was also required with the launch of Donkeywatch whereby their supporters can view the donkeys on Slade Farm. The live footage is linked wirelessly to transmitters that stream the live pictures to the website.

The wireless connectivity was also used to support the charity's IT needs during an annual festival held in the middle of one of Slade House Farm's fields.

**swcomms** provided **professional services** to audit The Donkey Sanctuary's local area network (LAN) which had grown organically as the organisation had expanded. We offered recommendations on best practice which resulted in a redesign to create an updated LAN infrastructure with a new firewall, virtual LANs and efficient management of VPN connections.

Business continuity for the telephone system was built into the solution design with dual processors and diversely routed lines located at both Slade House Farm and nearby Trow Farm allowing The Donkey Sanctuary full business continuity in the event of a system or line failure at either site. This highly resilient design ensures The Donkey Sanctuary remains operational at all times.

We pride ourselves on having a large number of clients that trust our judgement in guiding them through new emerging technologies that will be to their benefit. The Donkey Sanctuary is a prime example of one of these.

**"It has been a pleasure doing business with swcomms. Not only have they met our business needs to enable us to communicate efficiently with all our sites globally and nationally, it is so easy dealing with one supplier for all our needs.**

**"Over the years of association with swcomms, we have built up a good working relationship with the engineers, support staff and the sales team."**

**Fiona Warren, telecoms co-ordinator**

**"The service provided by swcomms has always been first class and I would always be happy to recommend them."**

**David Illsley, IT manager**

