THE TAMAR BRIDGE & TORPOINT FERRY

The Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry benefits from a resilient wide area network and VoIP telephone system to integrate their two very different but intrinsically complementary transport links.

The Tamar Bridge is a toll bridge carrying the A38 trunk road across the River Tamar between Plymouth on the east bank and Saltash on the west bank. Torpoint Ferry is a 24-hour chain ferry service between Plymouth and Torpoint. Both provide a vital link between Cornwall and Devon.

On opposite banks of the river, The Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry sites were using separate telephone systems but with their offices due to be re-developed, the IT manager felt it was time they explored the possibility of a solution that would unify them to improve their efficiency and the end-user experience.

swcomms analysed their existing costs and services to design a solution that would overhaul their business communications and future-proof them for upcoming technology changes and growth.

Although the telephony system was the main driver of the project, we had to look at the supporting infrastructure before we could suggest a replacement solution. Their two systems had been running on legacy ISDN channels. This voice technology is being phased out to be replaced by internet-based voice services.

There are multiple benefits of using SIP; not least, the cost savings afforded by free calls to UK landlines and mobiles, plus reduced line rental charges.

However, to effectively use SIP and to link the two sites together, we needed to upgrade their connections to the internet and between the two offices.

For SIP, we deployed internet leased lines to both offices. These superior connections are suitable for both data and voice and can provide the quality of service needed for calls. They are also supported by service level agreements that guarantee any downtime is kept to a minimum of hours rather than days or weeks, as can be the case with broadband services.

We linked the sites with a 10Gb internet leased line and a 1Gb backup connection in case of a fault on the primary link.

With these connections in place, our engineers installed a Mitel Connect VoIP solution and 75 handsets shared between both sites to unify the two sides of the business.

Calls can be picked up and transferred between the two sites with ease, while staff can use a PIN to sign into any handset to work from any desk, on either site.

The Mitel Connect is fully scalable to accommodate future growth and is easy to use and manage reducing their total cost of ownership.

A leading example of an on-premise telephone system, the Mitel Connect solution supports manager/secretary working, automated attendant, out-of-hours greetings, voicemail for all staff, integrated voicemail-to-email and selected call recording.
We also provided contact centre and call reporting software (integrated with their CRM), for The Tamar Bridge agents that handle all incoming enquiries and the booking office.

Mobility needs were met with further licences that enable mobile phones to be integrated with office extensions, so these staff members can remain contactable at whichever office they are working from, or off-site or when working from home.

We also deployed point to point video calling between the two sites which can be accessed via the Mitel Connect unified communications client.

The entire solution has N+1 redundancy built in with localised hardware at both offices so if one fails, the other will still operate. The triangulation of the leased line connections also means that SIP will be still available if there was a fault on one of the leased lines. There is no single point of failure within this solution, which means all-important disaster recovery was built in to ensure the offices can make and take calls in the event of an emergency.

Since this deployment, our partnership with The Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry has grown to include the provision of their Wi-Fi to support mobile working and web filtering solutions. Both are business-class services that are robust enough to cope with the demands of busy dual-site organisation.

The web filtering ensures that staff cannot view harmful or distracting content, their network is protected from malicious intrusion and their bandwidth is optimised to prioritise business needs.

The Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry benefits from an ongoing relationship with swcomms underpinned by a service level agreement and a dedication to customer service to ensures we make regular contact with the IT manager while promptly responding to queries and any fault reports. We provide a single point of contact for all their communications services and are their go-to experts for advice on technological developments that could improve their daily operations.

“From the design stage through to installation and training, swcomms has been excellent. The new Mitel system is a vast improvement and provides a high level of redundancy, which is critical to our operation.

“The system is easy to use and manage, and the support provided by swcomms is excellent.

“We have worked with swcomms for many years and look forward to maintaining and building on the excellent relationship we have with them.”
Rob Woodhall, ICT manager