

The Telkonet iWire System™

Best Western Swan Hotel, Wells, UK



Type of building	Hotel and conference centre
Location	Wells, UK
Year built	15th Century
Number of buildings	3 buildings
Number of floors	2 and 3 floors
Number of rooms	89 guest rooms, 5 conference suites
Telkonet installation date	December 2005

The Challenge

To provide a historic hotel with a disruption-free broadband Internet distribution system that would combine the access mobility of WiFi with the security of a hard-wired solution.

Wells, the UK's smallest cathedral city, is in a historically rich part of the English countryside. Close by is the city of Bath, with its Roman baths and classical Georgian architecture, and the town of Glastonbury with its famous Tor, steeped in Arthurian legend. Bridging the gap between mediaeval history and 21st century hospitality in the heart of the city is the 15th century Swan Hotel, a Best Western GB venue.

The hotel's main source of trade is firmly in the modern commercial world, with corporate customers forming the bulk of its weekday clientele, making the need for easy-to-connect broadband facilities imperative throughout the hotel. Providing weekend trade is the region's constant flow of tourists, who come to see the cathedral's impressive 12th century architecture, visible from within a few steps of the hotel, and the moated Bishop's Palace, which is reputed to be the oldest inhabited house in England.

The Swan Hotel's business clientele ranges from the Ministry of Defence (MoD), a regular customer for the hotel's conference facilities, to stars and production crews from the film industry, who make use of the city's period backdrop. Terri Chichester, general manager of the Swan, explained: "Given the demand from corporate customers, our ability to offer broadband facilities was obviously an essential business strategy. Having broadband available in your hotel is the 21st century equivalent of saying 'yes, the rooms do have tea and

coffee facilities'. Added to our own reasons, it is Best Western policy to ensure that in all its venues the public areas, and at least 15% of guest rooms, have broadband access. Here, we can already offer 100% availability.

"We initially thought we would have to cable our three-building site with CAT 5, and a potential supplier did undertake a survey. However, we wanted to avoid compromising the fabric of our historic building in any way, and taking the CAT 5 route would have caused an unnecessary amount of disturbance to the building and disruption to our business. Divine Internet, who had already installed Internet access systems at other Best Western sites, also undertook a survey. As a result, Divine suggested that a far more appropriate option would be to utilise the Telkonet iWire System™, which could be installed to deliver a combination of secure, hard-wired access – important for our MoD delegates – and WiFi, virtually anywhere around our site."

The Solution

Install the Telkonet iWire System™, to avoid re-cabling the historic building, and to transform the hotel's electrical wiring into a site-wide network backbone.

As the Telkonet iWire System utilises a building's existing electrical wiring as a network backbone, it minimised the need for additional cabling, contributing to the system's overall economy. The Telkonet option therefore proved to be more economic than CAT 5, and the Swan Hotel also received a grant from Connectivity Somerset, a regional support agency, to help further with the installation costs.

We are very pleased with the results of the Telkonet system, from both business and technical standpoints, and it has also generated considerable extra revenue – well into four figures across the first six months.

Terri Chichester,
General Manager, Best Western Swan Hotel

Terri Chichester continued: "The installation process was extremely trouble-free. We didn't really notice it happening, as the Divine Internet team were very sympathetic to the needs of our business and to the conservation needs of the building itself. Our corporate guests and government visitors like the security of connecting their laptops via the Telkonet iBridge™ interface units – these are normally hired out from Reception, and are simply plugged into any power socket in the hotel to provide broadband access. Any guests that are less concerned with security can use our WiFi facilities, with coverage available throughout the hotel.

We felt it a wise investment to broadband-enable the entire site, as this gives us the best platform for long-term business. We have won several conference bookings, and block bookings for rooms, purely on the strength of offering broadband. It ticks another box when enquiries come in, much like having toilets for the disabled. We are very pleased with the results of the Telkonet system, from both business and technical standpoints, and it has also generated considerable extra revenue – well into four figures across the first six months."

Robert Barr, managing director of Divine Internet, also commented on the installation: "This project is an excellent example of how the Telkonet iWire System can be deployed as a secure broadband access system, and also as a universal IP backbone for connecting other devices – in this case, WiFi access points. It's an obvious fact that every hospitality venue will have mains wiring, and so by default the bulk of the work involved in installing Telkonet's solution has already been done before you even arrive on site.

"The Telkonet system simply injects a broadband feed into a building's electrical wiring, usually at the circuit breaker box and, in effect, forms an IP network layer over the power circuits while leaving their electrical functionality unaffected. It's very simple and very effective, and proved to be an ideal medium for linking the Swan Hotel's site together. For example, we used it to drive a wireless access point at the back of the main hotel building to bridge the distance to the conference centre, which is on a separate power circuit, converting back to Telkonet's system to distribute broadband around the centre itself. Telkonet iBridge units are installed wherever necessary throughout the conference centre, to drive the WiFi points.

The Swan's installation was completed in around one working week, which is rather longer than average for this size of hotel, but given the complexity of the site, and the number of WiFi points installed, it was still a fast result – we have previously completed a 163-room hotel in 3 days! At the Swan, we were very aware of the building's important heritage and frequently had to work carefully within the confined and ancient roof spaces to position the WiFi points."

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