

**CONGLETON BOROUGH COUNCIL GOES LIVE WITH NEW IP COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM****FROM NEC PHILIPS**

**August 2007:** Congleton Borough Council has gone live with a new Voice over IP (VoIP) communications system from NEC Philips Unified Solutions, in a contract valued in the region of £130,000. The solution is a fully converged infrastructure underpinned by a UNIVERGE communications server, with an integrated desktop application for improving call handling and management and a Wide Area Network to support the Council's operations across the county.

The new VoIP communications system will initially cater for around 400 members of staff and will lead to significant cost savings and enhanced performance and quality of service. It will also enable the Council to deal with higher volumes of incoming calls with greater speed and efficiency.

Congleton Borough Council's implementation of a new communications system comes as part of a centralisation process, an initiative aimed at rationalising the Council's disparate offices and providing a foundation for the continued delivery of 'joined-up' services. The centralisation initiative brings together the office based staff from the sites in Congleton, Sandbach and Alsager into one new purpose built modern premises at Westfields in Sandbach.

Neil West, Head of IT at Congleton Borough Council, explains, "Improved performance and quality of service were the main drivers in the selection of the new communications system. We wanted to be able to use the same infrastructure for voice and data, whilst still having the assurance that the platform was reliable, resilient and secure. The UNIVERGE server and the infrastructure provided by NEC Philips more than meet these requirements."

West continues, "We were keen to invest in a VoIP system to take advantage of the latest technologies. Our old telephone system was outdated and lacked some key functionality. In addition, we needed to rationalise our communication lines out to remote sites and it made economic sense to invest in VoIP. Congleton Borough Council still has a number of remote sites and it supports five leisure centres and it is essential for our phone system and networks to connect up to those sites at high speed with complete ease of operation."

The Council has already seen benefits in terms of economic savings on its communication lines and has seen its network speed increase significantly. The new user application has also provided the Council with additional functionality, such as providing users with presence information, voicemail, centralised directory and advanced call management, which has enabled it to deal with incoming calls more quickly and effectively.

West says, "All the criteria that was set for the system has been met and overall the project and partnership has been a resounding success. The feedback I have received from employees has been very positive and many have commented on the enhanced speed of the new network."

Commenting on the project management and implementation of the NEC Philips solution, Neil West concludes, "The implementation team has been extremely supportive & responsive and have been on hand to offer help and guidance at every stage. We are very impressed with the functionality that the NEC Philips solution can provide, and we look forward to taking further advantage of the benefits of VoIP technology within our organisation."

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