

“A fantastic tool” - BT i-Witness delivers image quality, operational efficiency & increased prosecutions for Fife Police

As well as providing high quality digital storage and retrieval facilities, BT Security Solutions’s i-Witness is a fully managed and future-proofed service which has significantly increased operational efficiency and enabled Fife Constabulary to bring more cases to court.



Stuart Ward, CCTV Officer for Fife Constabulary

“The fact that the i-Witness system is effectively ‘future proofed’ was one of the key factors in our decision to go with the BT Solution”

**Stuart Ward
CCTV Officer
Fife Constabulary**



Stuart Ward, CCTV Officer for Fife Constabulary with Ivan Watkinson of BT Security Solutions

The need for change from analogue to digital

Fife Constabulary undertakes the day-to-day operation and management of the region’s CCTV system on behalf of the Fife Community Partnership.

Fife was experiencing a range of issues with its analogue storage and retrieval system. Tapes had to be changed every three hours for the live feeds, and every 12 hours for the multiplexed images, taking staff away from their core role of monitoring. The volume of tapes was leading to storage problems and also substantial cost implications, not least because of the need for secure destruction of the tapes requiring a specialist cleaning and crushing process. However, probably the biggest weakness of the analogue system was that it didn’t offer the ability for instantaneous retrieval of images. In the event of a major incident the system would have to be stopped from recording, in order to rewind and view the tape.

Fife first started looking at digital recording when the CCTV network was expanded with 22 more cameras being added in 2004. Stuart Ward is Force CCTV Officer for Fife Constabulary. He explains, “We trialled about ten different digital video recording systems with each one getting a three or four week run-out.

Stuart identified huge variations in performance. “Some systems downloaded the necessary viewer along with the images, others did not,”

he says. “That we would be able to provide high quality images in a ready-to-use form for the courts was a pretty vital consideration.”

i-Witness - Managed & Future-Proof Solution from BT Security Solutions

Towards the end of 2005, Fife saw a prototype version of the BT Security Solutions i-Witness system. “Rather than being just a very good recorder with fast search and retrieve it was a managed service,” he says. “To us that was a very attractive proposal.

“The pace of development with digital recording means that equipment can quickly become obsolete. With any off-the-shelf solution once you’ve bought it, that’s it, you’re stuck with it. But with the managed service that i-Witness offers we had a solution that would be upgraded to keep pace with technology, all as part of the package.

“The fact that the i-Witness system is effectively ‘future proofed’ was one of the key factors in our decision to go with BT”, explains Stuart.

“We also chose it for the search tools, audit facility, watermarking and authentication system that is vital for court in order to be able to demonstrate an evidence. It also offered a good tool-set in terms of being able to enhance captured images,” he adds.

A True Partnership Approach

The first image recordings made using the system began in November 2006, and after a test period the system went fully live in February 2007.



Mark Waterfall, CCTV Supervisor of Fife Constabulary uses BT i-Witness. Also pictured are Stuart Ward, CCTV Officer for Fife Constabulary and Ivan Watkinson of BT Security Solutions.

“During the installation, because i-Witness is a managed system it was possible to tailor it to our particular requirement,” explains Ward. “We were able to steer and guide BT as to exactly what we required and they were very accommodating. It was a true partnership approach,” he says.

“BT’s installation engineers were absolutely spot-on and the communication was very good. If ever there was a problem with the system BT was able to respond and deal with it exceptionally quickly,” he says.

Image Quality & Operational Efficiency

As soon as the CCTV room becomes aware of an incident – brought to their attention directly through monitoring or by police and community support officers on the ground – then the relevant image data is pulled off the system and stored for as long as is needed.



Offices Worldwide

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This data is output in two formats – to DVR and also to analogue tape, the latter being the form in which the Fife courts service prefers to receive evidence.

The i-Witness system has now been operational since February 2007. Stuart is very pleased with the image quality of the evidence being stored and retrieved from the i-Witness system: “With the analogue system the time-lapse between the frames that we were capturing – at worst case one every 4 seconds – meant that often we would miss crucial events for court purposes. “So, from that point of view, the i-Witness is streets and streets ahead of the old system. But as well as the faster frame rates we can record, the quality of the individual frame images is very comparable with the analogue system,” says Stuart.

i-Witness has also greatly improved the efficiency of Fife’s CCTV control room. The operators no longer have to perform the tape changes, they no longer have to de-Gauss the tapes and they no longer have to track back and forth to the tape storage room.

Tremendous Improvement – a Fantastic Tool

“In terms of incident review and management the fact that we no longer have to stop recording in order to review recent incidents is a tremendous improvement,” says Stuart. “With i-Witness the operators can now quickly review incidents as soon as they happen.

“They can even do this as an incident is unfolding. They can be watching the incident live, whilst at the same time be able to very quickly be reviewing what’s gone before, and then they can relay that information at the same time to officers on the ground. It means we can see an incident and be able to respond very quickly.”

Another major increase in efficiency that i-Witness has allowed concerns the review of recorded material. Because of the ease of use of the i-Witness system, Fife’s CCTV review officer is now able to carry out far more review operations in a day than with the old system. “It’s at least quadrupled the review rate,” says Stuart.

“From both the operators and the review officer’s point of view the i-Witness is a fantastic tool,” concludes Stuart.

Increased cases put to court

Fife Constabulary’s CCTV Officer Stuart Ward explains why his Community Safety Partnership chose BT Security Solutions: “We went with i-Witness because it is a managed system and because to an extent it is ‘future-proofed’.”

“With i-Witness we are making considerable improvements in efficiency compared with the previous system. Image frame quality is as good as with analogue. Critically, though, because we are now recording at far higher frame rates, we’re actually capturing more information from every incident. The direct effect of which is that i-Witness has enabled us to increase the number of cases that we are able to put to the court,” says Stuart.

“Our experience with BT and i-Witness has been very positive – I am very happy that the way we have chosen to go has been the right way,” he concludes.

Why BT Security Solutions

BT Security Solutions i-Witness CCTV digital storage and retrieval technology offers:

- Fully-automated CCTV data storage and retrieval platform
- Evidential quality image handling at up to 25 frames per second
- Fully-scalable solution offering RAID 5 storage with optional RAID mirror
- Easy-to-use, intelligent image retrieval
- Fast, flexible output to DVD-R
- In-built audit trail and four-level secure access
- BT Security Solutions managed and fully service-wrapped solution

To find out how BT Security Solutions’s i-Witness technology can help to store and retrieve evidential quality CCTV image data that is fit for purpose, visit us at www.btsecuritysolutions.com or telephone **0800 800 828**