

Advanced access control manages onsite security at MediaCityUK

MediaCityUK, an international hub for technology, innovation and creativity located at Salford Quays is home to companies such as the BBC, ITV, Ericsson, dock10 and Kellogg's. These are complemented by more than 250 smaller media and digital businesses, all using advanced contactless access technology from SALTO to provide site wide security.



Developed as a joint venture between Peel Land and Property Group (Peel L&P) and Legal and General Capital, MediaCityUK was designed around the specific needs of the media and creative industries, and the bespoke community features one of the biggest HD studio complexes in Europe; commercial offices; apartments; retail units, two hotels and a spectacular waterfront public piazza.

Peel L&P own and manage 12 million sq ft of property and 20,000 acres of land and water, with holdings mainly concentrated in the north west of England, but they also own and manage significant assets throughout the UK with a total portfolio value of £2.6 billion.

We spoke with Head of Security Tony Chebrika and consultant Richard Sumner of RS Security Consultants who has been working with Peel L&P since 2015, to get a feel for how their access control solution is used to manage this diverse site.

What types of door are you controlling – internal or a mix of internal and external?

Tony: “It’s a mix of both types. We’re using SALTO readers to control road blockers, gates and barriers, with wall readers to control main entry doors and mostly XS4 handle sets to control internal doors.



Other onsite users such as SIS (Sports Information Services) have their own individual SALTO solution but also have access to MediaCityUK doors i.e. they carry access permissions on one card for two systems. This is the same for ITV who also run their own system.

All doors, whatever their location, are mainly accessed via contactless cards but we’re also using SALTO’s JustIN Mobile with Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE). This enables a smart phone to be used as the access credential for the electronic lock on the door. The mobile key is sent ‘Over the Air’ (OTA) to a JustIN Mobile app installed on a registered and verified smart phone. The user receives a message that they have a new key and for which doors they have access rights. They can then present their smart phone to the lock to gain access via the JustIN Mobile app.”

You’ve recently designed a new security system – what did this involve?

Richard: “Yes, the existing solution was all proprietary making it difficult to operate, what it needed was a unified security system and a unified control room. So having tendered for the work I began working with Tony and his team. Based on an operational requirement and an evaluation of the product sets in the market place, Tony and I selected product sets that would not only meet our requirements today but considered a road map that would enable the systems to grow as developments came on board.

We selected SALTO as the access control solution plus IP Video Management Software firm Meyertech, Wavestore, AXIS cameras, 2n Intercoms and Siklu Wireless links. It was my task to procure and manage the new security upgrade which would include new cabling, software and IP cameras site wide tied into a new state-of-the-art control room.

The goal of the upgrade was to implement event driven alarms and recordings. This would operate through a single user interface, which would enable control of all existing standalone systems across multiple sites so the new control room could see at a glance how and when people moved around all the different buildings.

SALTO was integrated with Meyertech and the wireless handle equipped doors - which operators can remotely lock and unlock - as part of the project as this was a first for both parties and the end results are fantastic with a solution that meets the end users requirements on driving alarms and isolation of doors through a single front end GUI.

This means when a door is accessed, the camera is activated to provide a visual recording which can be used alongside audit trail data from the door itself. Another useful feature is that when a door alarm goes off, for instance in the case of a door being left open or forced, the camera system can display footage from 5 seconds before and 5 seconds after the event – making it possible to identify the culprit and then begin tracking them through the rest of the system.”

Did sustainability and environmental considerations play a part in the decision making?

Tony: “Yes our legacy matters so we take great pride in the way we go about our business and look to develop a long-term, sustainable future. In fact Peel L&P has recently been awarded a silver medal for its sustainability achievements placing it in the top 10% of participating global companies specifically for its environmental performance.

This cuts across to our suppliers too. It’s important for us to ensure that the companies we work with share our values and SALTO, like us, takes its environmental responsibilities seriously. Their factory headquarters has achieved the feat of going entirely carbon neutral, the electricity used in manufacturing their products is generated by on-site solar panels or purchased as certified green electricity and they lead the way in the delivery of sustainable access control solutions by providing customers such as ourselves with smart lock products that reflect our own environmental values.”

Is support for your access system provided by the company, by an approved partner or do you self support with your own trained staff?

Tony: “We took a great deal of care when evaluating and selecting our access control system so what we have is reliable and any issues are minor and few and far between. When it comes to technical support, routine maintenance, troubleshooting and so on, we self support with trained MediaCityUK staff but can call on additional support from SALTO as the manufacturers as and when we need to do so.”

Is there more development still to come at Media CityUK?

Tony: “Yes, MediaCityUK is one of the fastest growing communities in the UK, and we are committed to ensuring it remains a safe and secure destination where everyone is welcome. MediaCityUK is a continually developing site and as new buildings and facilities are added further electronic locks and other security measures will be installed to control access to them. Our community of workers and residents have been made aware of the new security improvements outlined above and they have been suitably impressed by the upgraded systems now in place.



Tell us about the awards that have been won for work on this project?

Tony: “Richard’s long-term work with me as Head of Security Peel Land & Property, Peel Retail Parks and MediaCityUK has been recognised on a couple of occasions. At the Association of Security Consultants 2020 awards he was presented with the Mike Cahalane Award which is presented annually to an independent security consultant for consultancy work and to highlight and recognise the positive difference independent security consultants can make in the public and private sector. And this year, at the first-ever virtual UK Outstanding Security Performance Awards (OSPAs) he won the Outstanding Security Consultant award.

Finally, can you summarise what access control provides for MediaCityUK?

Richard: “Access control has been a major consideration from the very first brief on this project due to the size of the development and its future expansion potential. A smart ‘keyless’ environment was always a prerequisite to control access and it gives Tony full control over his security requirements. To date the SALTO solution has worked well and provides effective, secure, simple to manage access control in multiple buildings across the site.”

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