

# ARE YOU WIRED IN?

**Thinking about providing wireless internet access on your park? Ty Newydd Leisure Park shares how it was transformed into a wireless, customer-pleasing hotspot**

**In today's world, it is increasingly crucial that parks adapt quickly and efficiently to changing customer demands. Perhaps one of the most obvious changes in modern society is the rapidly increasing use and need of communication tools such as mobile phones, Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) and laptops. And with those tools comes the increasing demand to hook up to the internet all around the clock, whether it's in the city or countryside.**

## Getting connected

As owner of the Ty Newydd Leisure Park Mike Monger found out, customer expectation to surf the web is increasingly strong in rural areas, such as at their location on the Isle of Anglesey. Many of the caravan holiday homes owners or visitors to the park, as on so many other parks, were business professionals looking to get internet access so they could collect email or work at the weekend, during vacation time or when taking a quick mid-week break.

The first solution was to offer internet access via a 'Hotspot' at the Clubhouse or Bar. The new service proved to be exceptionally popular among the park's customers. Rather than satiating the customer's appetite for the world wide web however, it seemed to whet it. More and more owners relayed to the park owners that they wanted the convenience of broadband internet access in the comfort of their own caravan holiday homes where they would be able to work in more appropriate surroundings (than the bar or clubhouse) or communicate with friends and family via email in privacy.

## One step further

Not ones to rest on their laurels, Mike and his family decided to tackle the problem head on and look at how to provide a solution that was both robust, required little management and was cost effective from the point of view of the initial investment and ongoing running costs.

## Obstacles

Wireless internet immediately presented a solution, but not without its major issues. First of all, the topographical location of the park threatened to be an obstacle, and then of course there is the consideration that nearly all caravan holiday homes are metal boxes and form a very effective barrier to wireless signals! Other minor issues that the park would have to overcome were location of existing buildings and infrastructure for the wireless equipment. Cost was also at the forefront of all considerations.

## Benefits

For Ty Newydd, however, these possible restrictions were worth overcoming to fulfil the potential for increasing retention of existing caravan owners and satisfying customer demand both for now and in the future. The park owners also considered further benefits that could come from having a wireless technology infrastructure in place on the park: ultimately it could also be used to offer other services such Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), which would allow caravan owners to have an internet-based telephone service in their caravan enabling them to speak to anyone in the world with the same

technology. The wireless infrastructure could also drive down the cost of park security using wireless IP-based security cameras instead of hardwired cameras.

## The solution

The Monger family soon discovered there are many different ways to go wireless but what they were looking for was a cost effective and robust solution that would meet the park's needs.

The solution, however, turned out to be closer to home than they could have imagined as Mike describes:

*'It never ceases to amaze that when you start talking to people about projects like this a wealth of knowledge and experience suddenly appears. Two of our customers on the park had substantial experience of outdoor wireless networks and decided that they would take on the project to create the network that would cover the park. They were able to advise us and design and implement a wireless solution to cover the entire caravan park, the clubhouse, main office and the house.'*

*'We sat down and had numerous discussions about how Wireless Internet access could work on a caravan park for both the caravan owners and for ourselves. We talked about the benefits to us as a business, in terms of generating additional revenue, from usage by the caravan holiday home owners and also from tourer and camping customers that may require internet access whilst at the park. We then planned the project and from the start were clear as to the costs of the system and the possible revenue potential. The park was then surveyed to ensure that all areas could be covered effectively and once the system was installed, we were trained on how to use it.'*

## The steps towards wireless network

### Upgrade

With the help of the park customers, the solution turned out to be fairly straight-forward. The first step was to replace the standard BT modem and upgrade the broadband connection to handle the additional web traffic that the new facility would attract.

### Controlling access

Secondly, new technology needed to be added so that the park could control and allow access onto the network. The technology is designed to create a secure environment that helps to open, manage and bill user accounts.

The system works by providing a voucher or code for a fee to wireless internet users that can be valid for any time period or by creating a yearly account for those who are visiting throughout the season and want unlimited access.

The network also has the facility for computers in the clubhouse in the fashion of an internet café for park visitors to use. Using the prepaid code system, how long the customer is online can be managed easily and efficiently. Any computer works with it, whether it is a desktop or laptop, wired or wireless.

### Privacy and security

Ty Newydd was also provided with a 'public' and a 'private' channel on the network, which helps to ensure that the access that visitors receive is very separate from that of the park owner, protecting the park's and the users' sensitive data.

Security is also an issue; preventing unauthorised free use and abuse of the system is important. The prepaid voucher that Ty Newydd supplies to the customer to allow them to access the wireless network also comes with a code. Each time a customer logs on or a connection is made to the wireless network, the user is prompted to enter their code; if they don't the connection is refused. This helps to prevent unauthorised access to the wireless network and to protect the park's own systems from abuse.



### Completing the job

Finally, a new 'Wireless Access Point' was installed in the clubhouse to provide a 'Hotspot' on the public network. Wireless Access Points were also installed at the park office and the house on the private network. 'Repeaters' were then continued...

placed on existing buildings around the park to repeat the signal and ensure coverage across the park. Where there was not a strong enough wireless signal to ensure good bandwidth and a reliable connection, a small 'subscriber unit' was installed in the caravan with an external aerial to give the signal a boost so the customer would be able to use the internet in the comfort of their caravan.

It all sounds extremely complicated and did take some time to put together. The point to remember, however, is that once the solution had been designed, the installation on the park only took four days.

## A good decision?

Ty Newydd's owners have no doubt that wireless was the way to go. The solution has been in place for six months and is operating well. Nearly 40% of the park's caravan holiday home owners have subscribed to the service already and are using it to collect emails, send pictures back home and check the weather forecast for Anglesey (very important in North Wales!).

*'We are confident that the investment we have made in wireless technology is going to help us retain our existing owners, attract new customers and increase revenue now and in the future',* said Mike.

So any words of wisdom for other BH&HPA members who may be considering something similar?

*'Our advice is to plan properly. There is no substitute for good planning when you are putting in place a project like this. Seek advice from people who know how these things work, make sure they have experience of outdoor wireless networks; they can and do behave very differently from the kind of equipment and configurations you might use in your home or office.'*

And you never know what might happen as a result! Following their own wireless success, Mike, along with the two

customers who originally took on the project, have launched a new venture called Park & Marine Wireless Networks to service the holiday and residential park sector with this kind of technology.



Ty Newydd Caravan Park is a family-run park located in Anglesey. It has been run by Mike Monger and his family for over 25 years and can be found at [www.tynewydd.com](http://www.tynewydd.com) and Mike can be contacted on [mike@tynewydd.com](mailto:mike@tynewydd.com).

Park & Marine Wireless Networks, the company formed out of the project can be found at [www.parkandmarine.com](http://www.parkandmarine.com) and can be contacted on [enquiry@parkandmarine.com](mailto:enquiry@parkandmarine.com). ●

## Enhancements to [www.ukparks.com](http://www.ukparks.com)

**In order to ensure that [www.ukparks.com](http://www.ukparks.com) remains as one of the leading park websites, BH&HPA is always seeking feedback on how it can be improved.**

Eagle-eyed members may have noticed some of the recent changes. The most visible change is the addition of a link to the interactive map from the main home page on [www.ukparks.com](http://www.ukparks.com). This will encourage more visitors to the website to use the interactive map, whereby they can 'fly' across the country and see the park's location on a satellite photo.

The Association has also made improvements to the park listings. Firstly the link to the park's website is now more user-friendly, and e-mails sent to the park from the website are now tagged as being sent from [ukparks.com](http://ukparks.com).

This will also be reflected in the statistics for the park's entry on [www.bhnpa.org.uk](http://www.bhnpa.org.uk).

Additionally, parks that offer online booking via their own website or a third party will be highlighted and a link provided to the online booking area.

[www.ukparks.com](http://www.ukparks.com) has received over 450,000 visitors since the beginning of 2006. Park owners and managers can help to ensure that their park is receiving its fair share of these visitors by enhancing their park's entry with three colour pictures and 500 words of text. It is also possible to add the very popular Special Offers to a park's entry, which will also be highlighted on any search page. This costs just £99+ VAT for a year and is self-administered via [www.bhnpa.org.uk](http://www.bhnpa.org.uk).



For further information about [www.ukparks.com](http://www.ukparks.com) please contact Murray Browning at BH&HPA central office on 01452 508510.