

# Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council, UK

Monitoring Wigan: once Barco, always Barco



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*Terry Bolton, Principal Officer,  
Wigan Council*

With a population of about 300,000 spread across an area of 77 square miles, Wigan is one of the UK's largest metropolitan districts. Committed to creating a safe and secure environment for everyone living in, working in and visiting the borough, Wigan's Metropolitan Borough Council has built out a well-oiled security policy. In the space of ten short years, the CCTV system has grown to a sizeable 600+ cameras which, currently, monitor seven town centres, three shopping precincts, two residential areas and various private locations. In a recently refurbished control room, powered by Barco, 15 operators keep a close watch on everything that is going on.

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When Wigan decided to upgrade its control room in 2002, they chose to install a large-screen solution instead of traditional TV monitors. The system had to have the clarity of the CRT solutions whilst giving operators the flexibility to monitor and zoom in on the information they need, when they need it. "In addition, we also wanted a system that had a long life expectancy, was low cost and had low power consumption, thus making it an eco-friendly solution," recalled Terry Bolton, who, together with Tony Hollinrake, was charged with the control room upgrade. As Barco's system ticked all of these boxes, Wigan installed four 67" XGA displays, based on DLP technology.

### Long-term relationship

In 2006, a thorough review of its control room operations persuaded Wigan to outsource a number of security areas. CCTV monitoring would remain in-house, with the control room moving to a new, airier and more spacious location. Hollinrake and Bolton started building their ideal control room and consulted closely with the control room operators: "The operators had been using the Barco wall for over six years and were very satisfied with the quality of the display, the system's ease of use and its flexibility to display different layouts of video signals as well as adding computer inputs," Hollinrake explained. "The operators' vote pro Barco and the great working relationship we had had with Barco since 2002, quickly convinced us to stick with Barco."



### Futureproof and scalable

Barco's new visualization solution also had to be future-oriented, scalable and ensure continuity. By July 2008 – two months earlier than anticipated! – Barco had installed an advanced video wall, consisting of six 70" rear-projection modules with DLP technology. "The new system really is everything we want it to be," said Bolton. The operators and their management praise the clarity, contrast and high resolution of the video walls and greatly appreciate the innovative Sense<sup>®</sup> technology which constantly measures and adjusts color value on each cube. The seamless display, too, is a great asset. As there's no gaps between the cubes, operators view one big video wall. As the Barco display wall is so big and clear, operators can move away from their spot monitors and go to a recreation area just off the control room whilst still being able to monitor the activities. And the large display wall fosters close co-operation," Bolton continued.

### A new level of monitoring

Bolton and Hollinrake further underlined the rich functionality of the Apollo wall management software. It allows the operators to easily change info on the wall, to quickly switch between different info, to pre-configure the content with templates, etc.: "Our day-shift operators have completely distinct requirements from the night-time or weekend opera-

tors but at a touch of a button, they can pull up the configuration they need to do their jobs more efficiently, by viewing the known hotspots with CCTV cameras. This really is a world away from traditional CCTV monitoring."

### Generate revenues

Wigan is one of the largest metropolitan districts in England. Cameras in the various town centers around the borough are connected by a fiber optic network to their respective remote control rooms which, in turn, are fed into a BT-leased link to the monitoring suite. In addition, Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council goes out and sells its services. The Wigan scheme has, for example, 30 external, contract-based, detector-activated systems feeding into it, monitoring a variety of locations. These include relationships with the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive to connect pictures from rail and bus stations, as well as car parks, commercial buildings or council owned/operated sports venues and schools. Hollinrake: "We want to use our new control room as a platform to go out to neighboring towns and promote the facilities available for monitoring services, risk assessments and alarm activated systems in schools, to name but a few. It's a perfect base for us to generate revenue which we can then put back into our authority for future expansions of our security infrastructure."

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