

Customer Story: Chester Cathedral

Projecting history helps increase visitor numbers by 300 per cent

Background

Chester Cathedral is a popular tourist attraction and its management team recently completed an innovative project to improve its visitor experience.

- **Building renovation work to open up the Bell Tower**
- **A multi-sensory audio visual presentation in the Bell Chamber**
- **Guided tour around the Cathedral**

“We looked at a number of options to attract more visitors. The one that stood out in terms of economic impact for the cathedral and city was to open up our bell tower.” Simon Warburton, Director of Operations.

The Challenge



The Cathedral team wanted to build a multi-sensory audio visual (AV) presentation in the chamber to help attract a family audience. Including:

- Projected images of the cathedral, its stained glass windows and its bell-ringing team at work.
- Surround sound system that would replicate the sounds of the bells as they'd have been heard when they were in place.
- Tour guide system to support guided tours of the cathedral

The project was an ambitious one: the chamber's louvre windows meant that the technology would need to cope with damp, wind and cold. In addition, the cathedral's Grade 1 listing severely limited the type of work that could be done. For instance, nothing could be attached to the stone. Also, the dark sandstone walls aren't ideal for displaying projected images.

Chester Cathedral is the Cathedral Church of the Diocese of Chester and popular tourist attraction.



“We've made some important changes to the visitor experience...The Bell tower is a hugely evocative place...In a very tough environment for technology, we've succeeded in creating a magical mix of the modern and medieval.”

Simon Warburton,
Director of Operations,
Chester Cathedral

Chester Cathedral

The Solution

The complete project included:

- Improvements to the spiral staircase
- Renovation of the tower roof,
- Better lighting,

And the building of a new visitor walkway around the bell chamber.

The AV element included:

- Installing a surround system with the speakers hidden from sight and installed within the 900-year-old bell frame – without being physically attached.
- Separate projectors positioned to beam images on two opposite walls – to give the impression that the images are within the walls.
- Supply and set up of a Tourguide system for use during the guided tours of the Cathedral.

“We were astonished by the quality of the images: despite the sunlight, the colours were vivid, rich and deep and the images crisp and sharp.”

Simon Warburton, Director of Operations.

Bright Images

Pure AV recommended Epson’s EB-G6350 projectors for their overall quality and versatility. The high brightness and lens shift technology ensured image quality was maintained despite the challenges of the environment.

Clear Sounds

The recorded bell sounds developed by production company Fuzzy Duck in conjunction with the Cathedral are played from a BrightSign media player through four weather-proof loudspeakers.

Guided Tours

The Cathedral runs several tours a day and the Sennheiser Tourguide systems offer a light portable radio system that is simple to operate and easy to clean.

Visitor Numbers are up 300 per cent

“We’ve made some important changes to the visitor experience and numbers have increased significantly. Cathedral at Height has played a lead role in this, surpassing all our expectations and helping to attract a younger audience. The bell tower is a hugely evocative place and people don’t expect the visual and aural experience that hits them when they walk into the chamber.” *Simon Warburton, Director of Operations.*

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